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EBU: Women Executives in Media 5th Meeting: Women and Sport

Thursday, February 8th, 2018 at 10am

Former President of the Republic of Finland **Tarja Halonen**

Keynote Speech on Women and Sport

Dear representatives of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and national broadcasters,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great appreciation that I participate in this 5th meeting of the **Women Executives in Media**. Please, feel warmly welcome to Helsinki! I like to congratulate you for selecting the theme of Women and Sport, to be discussed today.

We have made a lot of progress in this area, but we still have a lot to do. I would like to concentrate on these **remaining challenges** in women's position in sport.

Nowadays, women and girls have more possibilities to participate in domestic and international arenas of sport, but it is not, even in Europe, the same what men and boys have. But the situation of women in management, administration and coaching, especially at the higher levels, is much worse. The progress has been slow.

In Europe, the number of **women in leadership positions** in governing bodies in sport is very low: an average of 10 percent. Employed female coaches are a minority in Europe, and they earn less than their male colleagues. Girls and women are vulnerable to sexual and gender harassment and abuse.

#Metoo- campaign has already reached lot of support. Film and theatre business has been especially active to clean up traditions. First news from

sport world have already been seen. I have a feeling that time is suitable for reforms.

The United Nations has underlined the importance of gender equality lately, in many ways.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes 17 specific goals, out of which one is achieving gender equality, plus, gender equality is a cross-cutting theme in the whole Agenda. In 2016, the World Health Organization and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights made a special cooperation program to promote women's and girls' health as a human rights issue. My own experience in this field, where I am involved, is that sexual and reproductive health and rights are a difficult question also at the UN. But things can be changed.

Dear audience,

Sport people have reached positive steps. Helsinki calls on the world of sport to lead the change, and to be the change. This was emphasized in **the 6th International Working Group (IWG) World Conference on Women and Sport in 2014**, which gathered to Helsinki almost 1000 participants. All the main international organizations, both governmental and sport organizations, were also represented. I had the opportunity to serve as the conference Patron. Globally, at present, 562 organizations have endorsed the resulting Brighton plus Helsinki Declaration.

In recent years, **the International Olympic Committee** has adopted important regulations for equal participation of both genders in the games. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) President, **Thomas Bach**, announced last April certain progress: there was an increase of 70 per cent in female participation in the composition of the IOC commissions since 2013. With this historical change, IOC underlined the implementation of Olympic Agenda 2020. It showed that a stronger participation of women, and a more diversified continental representation, are the main priorities of the IOC. Fine; – now, this should have an impact on national policies and practices.

As the **Winter Olympic Games** will soon begin in Pjongchang, it is interesting to have a look at the Olympic Program. In Sochi Winter Games, female and male representation was equal regarding the number of events. But women

still lacked behind in actual numbers as participants. IOC has announced to achieve full gender equality for the first time at the Youth Olympic Games in 2018.

Dear friends,

We have to follow up on how this all will be implemented in practice! Media can make it visible. I hope you are active. There is still a huge difference in the media coverage of women's and men's sport in Europe.

But not only the quantity, but also the quality is different. Often, women are portrayed differently than male athletes, both in images and in the languages used. I understand that less women work as sport journalists and editors, but we should find ways to request how both male and female actors could mainstream gender equality.

Dear audience,

Let us come back to Europe. **The Council of Europe** has a long experience in promoting gender equality in sport, and has lately launched implementation of a road map: Gender equality in sport – moving towards.

The European Union has also been active. The European Commission launched the strategic Action on gender in sport in 2014.

The European Commission proposals for strategic actions by 2020 include the following targets:

- gender stereotyping in the sport media is reduced, and there is a fair portrayal of both women and men
- media coverage of women's sport and women in sport is increased to 30 percent, with a long-term aim of 40 percent
- gender balance among the staff of the European sport media departments is increased to a minimum of 30 percent, in all positions.

The European Broadcasting Union and national broadcasters are at the heart of the sport communication in Europe and globally. They are core media partners for international and national sport organizations. There are also good

national examples on how to succeed in developing the role of women's sport in media.

Dear friends,

As you might be aware, **Finland celebrated 100 years of independence last year**. The National Council of Women of Finland and the Council for Gender Equality organized a project, called 100 acts for gender equality. Nearly 300 concrete actions in promoting gender equality took place in Finland and globally. Participants were companies, NGOs, municipalities, ministries, trade unions, universities and other actors.

The Finnish National Broadcasting Company Yle also participated as a partner. It launched a project to promote the amount and visibility of women's sport in its sport coverage. It has already, by now, had an impact on how women's sport is portrayed in media. Increased visibility has an empowering effect on female athletes and young girls, who hope to become athletes. But it also affects everyone following sport. Making women's sport more available will hopefully increase interest in it. This in turn will hopefully be followed by increased resources and sponsorships.

If not before, Yle has now become the number one sport media in covering women's sport in Finland. It has also received several recognitions for its actions, such as a yearly gender equality prize awarded by the Ministry of Culture and Education. And Yle is also now with you. I hope that other media actors will follow.

Dear friends,

Challenges in gender equality exist in all countries. Despite positive development, new phenomena can suddenly reveal the unpleasant state of reality. The #metoo campaign is an excellent example of this.

Gender equality has not been perfectly reached anywhere, also not in Finland. I tend to say that gender equality is not a still photo. The process creates new goals and continuous work is imperative!

Finally,

Gender equality requires broad partnerships. Governments have their important responsibilities, but they need contribution by the civil societies, private sector, academia, as well as media. **The media plays an essential role** in informing us of developments around the world. Also, it has a role in developing our ways of thinking, our values and opinions. The media creates not only news but builds world views. You are important for us.

Thank you for your attention.