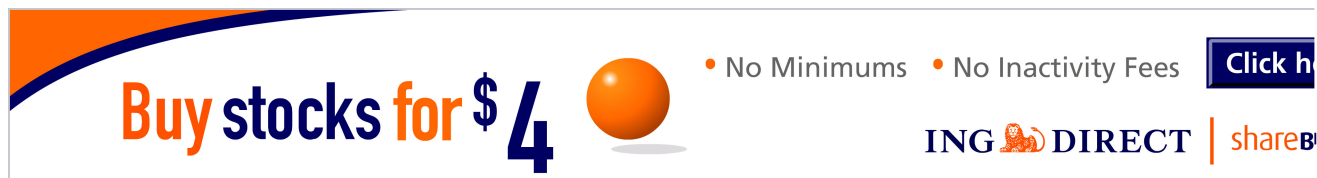


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## Women call for greater role in conflict resolution

BRUSSELS (AP) — Leading female power-brokers from around the world appealed Thursday for a larger political role for women in solving conflicts and poverty.

Over 50 participants, including leaders, foreign ministers, lawmakers, first ladies and top European Union and U.N. officials participated at the talks to promote women's empowerment ahead of International Women's Day on Saturday.

"That is where we, as women whose voices count, have a role to play," said EU External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner, who hosted the conference. "We must rise to the challenge and push for change, for if we don't who will?"

She said women were often the first to suffer during threats to security — either during war, poverty or natural disasters.

"Women are often the most vulnerable members of society, subject to discrimination and abuse like harmful traditional practices or punishment by stoning," Ferrero-Waldner said, adding female leaders had to "give voice to those who would otherwise be voiceless."

Finnish President Tarja Halonen called on all participants to ensure they raise women's rights promotion in all their dealings with other nations worldwide. She noted the plight of women's rights to education and representation in Afghanistan as a big problem.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko said women could offer a different kind of leadership that could be used to prevent conflict.

"Making use of force is not a sign of strength, it's rather a sign of weakness," Tymoshenko said. "It's up to women to break out of these unhealthy traditions and dogmas and lead people down a different path. We have got to incorporate these principles, move away from juntas and dictatorships and that's not something that can be done by force."

"The key element here," said Tymoshenko, "is the fact that everybody has got to be treated on an equal footing."

Many participants, led by Egyptian First Lady Suzanne Mubarak, raised the need for nations to implement U.N. resolution 1325, adopted eight years ago. It calls for the involvement of women in conflict resolution, especially in key hotspots like the Middle East.

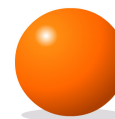
Israeli lawmaker Amira Dotan said she was eager to work with her Palestinian counterparts, some of who attended Thursday's conference at EU headquarters, "to look for new initiatives, a new way of thinking," to find a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Ana Palacio, vice president of the World Bank, listed U.N. statistics that a vast majority of women in

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poorer Asian and African nations were failing to register their newborns which meant they did not have access to health or education programs.

"Four-fifths of all births are unregistered in Nepal. In sub-Saharan Africa over half of children are not registered," Palacio said. "Which means whoever does not exist legally, cannot be a key actor. The same way that 70% of the poor are women and a large number of these children are women, girls, and we have to address this."

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