



Rice networks with women leaders as U.N. meets

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NEW YORK (Reuters) - U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice gathered other influential women political leaders on Saturday to promote the empowerment of their gender.

"We all have experiences we would like to share," she told about 20 female political figures, including Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Africa's first elected woman head of state.

"We have to promote and empower women," she added. "We are going to champion the empowerment of women because it is only right," said Rice, who held the meeting on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly.

The goal of the exclusively female meeting was to discuss strategies to improve the lives of women worldwide and cultivate new leaders like themselves in the future.

Rice's name has often been raised as a potential presidential candidate for her Republican Party in 2008 but she has continually squashed the idea.

"Many, many studies worldwide show that when women are fully empowered, economies do better, families do better, children are better educated," Rice said.

Women ministers from Benin, Barbados, Croatia, Iceland, Austria, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Iraq, Greece, Malawi, Mozambique, Poland, Tanzania and Lichtenstein were among those represented at the meeting.