

## **Call for Action for a more gender balanced U.S. Administration**

### **Generating change; generating equality**

I'd like to present my warmest congratulations to the newly elected new President of the United States, Barack Obama. His task will be challenging, to say the least, with two wars and the worst financial crisis facing the U.S. and the rest of the world in a century. However, I trust that the American people chose the best man for the position; I believe in his energy to generate change. He has mobilised young people, poor people and the Afro-American population. He managed to get people off the couch, to donate money and to engage in the local campaign activities, bringing the voter turnout in U.S. elections to record levels. He signals a willingness to co-operate with international partners, including with the European Union on climate change.

This gives me hope, and I believe we have come to a cross roads, where we can either choose to *change*, or *take a step back*. Change in terms of better cooperation in order to fight global challenges such as the financial crisis, climate change, security, the fight against poverty, hunger and disease in the developing world. But change also in terms of creating a new social order, free of injustices, by actively promoting the well-being of all citizens.

In this light, I trust Barack Obama to apply the principles of gender equality, when appointing a new U.S. administration. Women make up for just over half of the population, and this should be reflected in the decision-making bodies. Currently, this is far from the case, as only 16% of Congress members are female. Women need to be present in politics, in order to influence the political agenda, but also in order to ensure a true representative democracy where all interests of the society are represented. Sadly, what path breaking feminist Mary Wollstonecraft said in 1792, "Women ought to have representatives, instead of being arbitrarily governed without any direct share allowed them in the deliberations of government", has still not been realised.

It is high time we act together, to fight this gender deficit on a global scale. There can be no modern democracy without equitable development, and no equitable development without gender balance.

*Margot Wallström, Vice-President of the European Commission and Chair of the Council of Women World Leaders Ministerial Initiative*