



## Message of the President for the Candle Lighting Ceremony 2023



Dear Members of BPW International

The friendly “Hello” of the singer Véronique Muller (*see Video*) is the introduction to my message to symbolize reaching out to you all in friendship.

I would like to thank you all for your generous gifts to our Club in Chernihiv and to Ukrainian refugees in Europe. Your money has helped us to realize four projects and one immediate action through BPW International: one in Poland, one in Arad, Romania, one in Italy and one in Madrid, Spain.

The **Federation of Poland** is helping Ukrainian children traumatized by the war with a dance and painting project to overcome the terrible effects which the war has had on them.

The **Club in Arad** is giving refugees support to integrate into Romanian society through language lessons.

**FIDAPA Italy** is giving 7 Ukrainian students the opportunity to continue their studies at Italian Universities. Each of the 7 districts chose a student and is giving support as well as financial help to them.

The **Madrid Club** is helping Ukrainian women through coaching and a business Incubator to find new work opportunities in Spain. A remarkable group of artists will be supported by an exhibition in the Spanish Capital which gives them the opportunity to show their work.

A consignment of most needed essential goods went directly to our **club in Chernihiv** and brought some relief. This will be continued as well as the support through money to the **institution in Lviv** which gives shelter to refugees leaving their country.

Unfortunately, the war is not over yet. The infrastructure of Ukraine has been systematically destroyed which makes it more difficult to survive in the country during the cold winter months. Please, don't forget Ukraine. The account for giving money is still open. There is a huge need and we will concentrate in the next weeks on a delivery to

our Club and the hospital in Chernihiv. Thank you all for your generosity.

The situation regarding **women's rights** has become bleak. Not only the decision of the Supreme Court in the USA to overturn the Roe vs. Wade verdict, but also the situation of women in Afghanistan and the persecution of women in Iran show us how fragile women's rights are and how little it takes to overturn them. We can protest loudly and rise up against injustice, human rights violations and even murder through demonstrations in our hemisphere, but the two states involved care little.

I wrote a letter to the Secretary General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, and to Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, asking them to take financial and economic sanctions. Among the NGO community was an initiative launched to advocate for the exclusion of Iran from the Commission on the Status of Women. Whom are we excluding there? On one side it is the state of Iran, but on the other it would also be an exclusion of all the Human Rights Advocates in the Country of Iran. We need to give these advocates a platform to be heard. To silence them means that Iran can act without control and without the knowledge of the world community.

On another note, I would like to encourage you to register with our **bpw.directory** and to create your international business card. At the moment we are assessing whether we can add the provision that each BPW member who registers also has the opportunity to advertise her own products.

The **database for our projects** now shows 296 projects led by BPW Clubs, Federations and Members. I was very proud to be able to add this list to our biannual report for our partner, the Global Compact. If you have not yet registered, please do so in the near future. Both databases show the competency and skills of our members, they are also a point of reference to our sponsors. Thank you very much for your support.

As you know, we have the protocol which is the **Candle Lighting Ceremony**. I would like to add to the existing one more candle for our sisters who are currently refugees or living in zones of war, disaster, or crisis.

I wish you all a very successful and prosperous 2023! May you be healthy, happy and full of energy.

Best wishes, your International President.

Dr. Catherine Bosshart  
BPW International President 2021-2024