



Dear Presidents  
Dear Members

Hoping that you had a very good beginning to the year 2024, I wish you all a prosperous, successful and happy New Year filled with joy and many good encounters and achievements.

We will meet with a lot of members in New York during **CSW68**, but before the conference starts, I will be very happy to connect with you during the **Leaders' Summit**, a tool which helps us to further develop our organization, to define where we stand and where we shall be going, to network, share concerns and define new goals and to advance together in sisterhood. The Leaders' Summit will take place on the **8th and 9th of March** and the Clare Fulcher Dinner during which we will honor our UN Representatives on the 10th of March. You will find the information on our website: [www.bpw-international.org](http://www.bpw-international.org)



A specific area of work we have been preparing in the last months is the **registration of BPW International in Geneva, Switzerland**. The General Assembly in Helsinki, 2011, decided to register BPW International under the Swiss Civil Code in Geneva. Unfortunately, the International President of this time was not familiar with the federalistic structure of Switzerland and registered us with the Welcoming Center of the Canton of Geneva for NGOs with Consultative Status with the UN, but not with the Registry of Commerce.

I discovered this during my time as VP UN. The Anti-money-laundering Act in Switzerland requires now NGOs of our size to be registered until July 2024.

Why is registration important: We do need a registration number for the bank(s), to receive funds for projects and also for legal cases. Registration with an Official Registry Office will guarantee transparency as all registered Companies and NGOs are in a database which is publicly accessible.



As a consequence we will have to comply with the articles relating to organizations under the Swiss Civil Code. This means that **we will have to amend our International Constitution**.

There are some details to be added: e.g. An additional page at the beginning of the Constitution which states exactly when the Constitution was last amended with date and signature of the outgoing President with the Executive Secretary and the incoming President with the new Executive Secretary. Moreover, we need to declare the signatories in the Constitution. The audited annual financial report not only has to be sent to the International Board, but has also to be voted upon. Therefore, the International Board will have to have a virtual vote on the acceptance of the report once every year. Moreover, there will be an Appendix with definitions.



The Executive submitted a motion to the International Board in mid December of last year to convene an **Extraordinary General Assembly** during which the delegates vote on the amended constitution virtually. During November and December 2023, we informed all five regions and presented the Draft Constitution.

To remedy our now vulnerable position we need the collaboration and support of you all. With the acceptance of an Extraordinary General Assembly and the amended Constitution, we will be able to work during the Congress on the Resolutions that will be handed in after the Call to Congress as a normal Congress Business.



A further area of work goes hand in hand with the international theme **“New Actions through Cooperation”**.

**A global Memorandum of Understanding (an MoU) with UN Women** which was concluded at the end of October 2023 occupied a large part of my work.

#### **What is this Memorandum of Understanding all about?**

In partnership with UN Women, we will bring together their respective programs "Women Impact Trade Hubs" and the "Women's Entrepreneurship Expo". As part of this partnership, we will drive positive change by addressing the existing gender imbalance in support structures such as incubators or accelerators and help create entrepreneurial ecosystems.

We started to work on the implementation of pilot projects in Africa and are now collecting interests in the other regions. This MoU will extend BPW's scope from advocacy to big projects in the regions directed by the Federations and Clubs in the respective countries. In the long run, BPW International will have to set up an additional unit to work solely on these projects.

**These are new perspectives which will help to realize for our members one aim we stand for: the economic independence of women.**



**2024 is the year of Congress.** You will find all information on our website. At the moment of production of this video, the Executive as International Planning Committee has not yet decided where the Congress will take place. By the time you watch the final version of my message, a decision will have been made.



I wish us all a peaceful year and hope also that our sisters in Ukraine, Palestine, Israel, Turkey, Morocco, and all over the world where war, conflict, economic crisis, earthquake and climate change have had a negative impact on the everyday lives of our members, will finally get some time to breathe and recover.

I wish us all an enriching time in our great network of Business and Professional Women. Hopefully, I will see you again soon.

Dr. Catherine Bosshart  
BPW International President 2021-2024