

August 20, 2002

The Honorable Colin Powell  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Powell:

As both Republicans and Democrats, we are proud of the leadership that the Bush Administration has provided on behalf of women in Afghanistan and elsewhere. As past and current elected and appointed leaders on issues important to women, we urge you to continue this leadership on human rights for women and girls by making the Treaty for the Rights of Women a priority for ratification.

We are pleased that the administration informed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in February that it generally supports ratification of this treaty, formally known as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW has helped women and girls in the 170 countries that have ratified it by establishing an international framework of standards for the treatment of women. Thanks to CEDAW, women in Tanzania can now inherit clan property, women in Turkey no longer need a man's permission to work, and domestic violence is now a crime in Colombia.

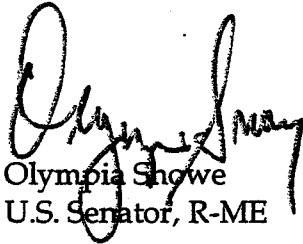
As you know, women still face staggering poverty and violence based on cultural bias and legal inadequacies. While our country will always be a world leader on human rights and has a long bi-partisan tradition of ratifying similar conventions on race, civil and political rights, and torture, we strongly believe that our failure to ratify this treaty has compromised our diplomatic relations. Most troubling, it permits regimes committing violations to distract attention from their own conduct.

Contrary to misinformation, the United States does not need to change a single law in order to ratify this treaty. The treaty has only the traditional enforcement mechanisms that respect national sovereignty and democracy. The CEDAW Committee, made up of experts from the ratifying nations, makes recommendations that are advisory to governments but not mandatory. These mechanisms have proved very effective in making CEDAW a tool for women's rights in countries

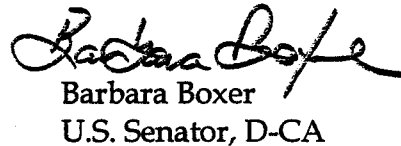
where those rights have lagged. However, the United States cannot hold a seat on this committee unless we are a treaty party.

Again, we applaud your leadership, and the leadership of this Administration, in securing the human rights of women and girls in Afghanistan and elsewhere. We hope you will bring that same passion to secure ratification of the CEDAW Treaty for the Rights of Women.

Sincerely,



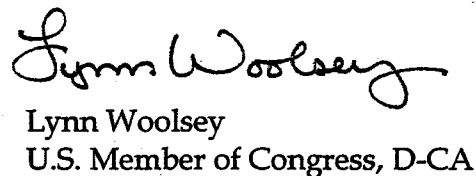
Olympia Snowe  
U.S. Senator, R-ME



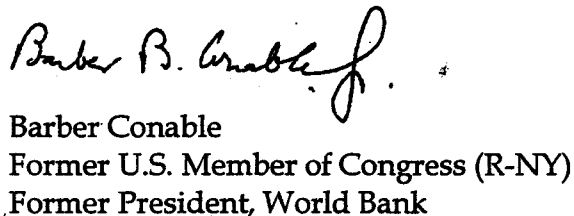
Barbara Boxer  
U.S. Senator, D-CA



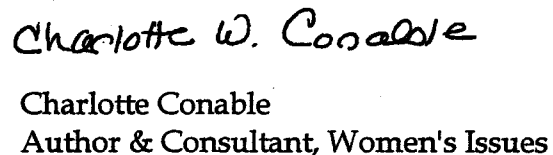
Connie Morrella  
U.S. Member of Congress, R-MD



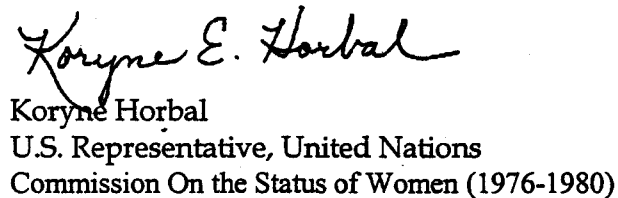
Lynn Woolsey  
U.S. Member of Congress, D-CA



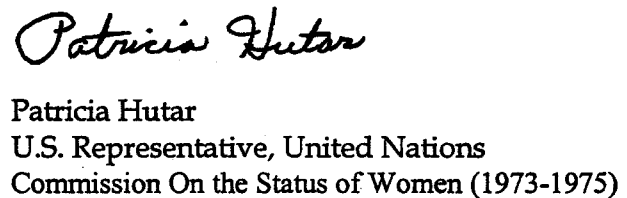
Barber Conable  
Former U.S. Member of Congress (R-NY)  
Former President, World Bank



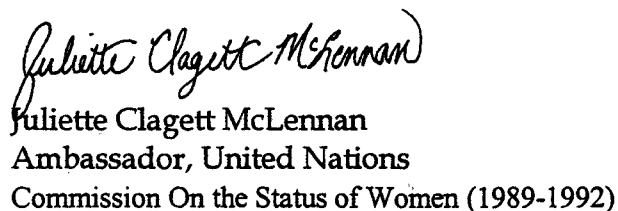
Charlotte Conable  
Author & Consultant, Women's Issues



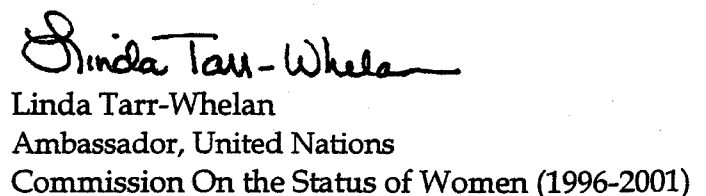
Koryne Horbal  
U.S. Representative, United Nations  
Commission On the Status of Women (1976-1980)



Patricia Hutar  
U.S. Representative, United Nations  
Commission On the Status of Women (1973-1975)



Juliette Clagett McLennan  
Ambassador, United Nations  
Commission On the Status of Women (1989-1992)



Linda Tarr-Whelan  
Ambassador, United Nations  
Commission On the Status of Women (1996-2001)