

PRESENTATION SI PRESIDENCY 2017-2019, July 29 2017, Rotterdam

Before opening my first BM I would like to thank you, dear Yvonne, for mentoring me in the lead-up to my presidency. I will elaborate on this subject this evening during the change of insignia, but for now, I would simply like to say that I am extremely grateful to you for all your guidance and patience during the past 18 months. I always knew that I could count on your support, and that was and is an enormous reassurance to anyone taking on this responsibility! But more will follow tonight.



Dear SI Board Directors, dear Officers, dear Silent Observers, I am honoured and humbled to take on the tasks of SI President, and I will do my utmost to meet the expectations that have been set in me. I am convinced that with good communications and with each other's support, our organisation will successfully move in the direction laid down by Board of Directors.



For those who do not know me very well, I am 62 years old, Dutch with an Indonesian background from my father's side. I am married and have three sons with partners, one of whom is a Soroptimist and two others in the making. We have one granddaughter, two grandsons and our 4th grandchild is due at the end of October.



My Soroptimist leadership career began as Union President of the Netherlands in 2003, then SIE Federation President from 2007 - 2009 and now SI President, I have been President of Women for Water Partnership since 2014. The two functions go hand in hand and are an added value to each respective organisation.



What would I like to achieve in the coming biennium? First and foremost we have to implement the decisions the SI Board took during the last Board Meeting here in Rotterdam. Especially the restructuring proposal will need a lot of attention and together with the restructuring implementation group we will aim to introduce the new structure in January 2018. I hope to have the support of the Federations to implement this restructuring with a skills-based and devoted group. As we have sold our premises in Cambridge, we must be prepared to move office before April 2018, which in itself is an enormous challenge. The archives at Cambridge HQ need sorting, which is another major task. However, considering that we are in the middle of preparations for the Centennial in 2021, the timing may in fact be good!

Talking about our 100th anniversary, wouldn't it be nice for SI to launch a virtual Soroptimist museum? I can see a modern way of communicating for instance in the form of a digital game featuring questions, answers and the history of our organisation and its Federations. An ideal way to introduce new members to SI, and a nice kind of entertainment, wouldn't you agree? You may say this is wishful thinking and dream on, Mariet. But it is definitely a way forward for young potential Soroptimists. 100 years of Soroptimist International is the achievement of all of us, and the SI Centennial Committee will continue to work on this event. I hope you'll give me approval to appoint Centennial committee members with an IT outlook towards the future.

That brings me to my favourite subject - communication. SI launched a new website at the beginning of this year. Developing a new site takes time and is an ongoing process. As you all know, SI's main focus is Advocacy and that is why communication is so important. SI has outstanding and competent UN representatives at six UN Centres. They have loads of experience



and vast amounts of information at their disposal which must be shared more widely. Wouldn't it also be great to have an SI UN Asian Pacific representative at the 7th UN Centre – the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok?



I attach great importance to clear and transparent communication, internally as well as externally to show the world what a great and wonderful organisation we are. Yes, we are truly wonderful! Our strength is the worldwide membership: 75,000 professional women in 133 countries, each women with her own expertise, knowledge and experience. Can you imagine how fantastic it would be if we were able to set up platforms of expertise in a worldwide **safe, protected and restricted** databank? Platforms available to members where they can find speakers, experts, UN representatives, support, information, sponsors for conventions, projects, presentations and more. This network, dear Soroptimists, is our strength. You might say again – dream on Mariet – but it is possible. It is a way to make us an invaluable asset to the world. This is a leap into the future, a way to strengthen and preserve Soroptimist International. We should use this goldmine: this means our members with their expertise and know-how.

So improving our communications internally and externally is a must. It is clear that one person in the SI HQ office cannot handle this challenge on her own. That is why I would like to appoint a communication person to support staff and officers in achieving better and more modern communications, which will make us more visible on social media. We need to write more blogs and articles, create a communication strategy; the list is long. I have not found a Soroptimist yet, who would like to assist us, but it is definitely one of my priorities and with your help we'll find someone, who you can approve at the next E-Board meeting.

Good communication is another reason to continue with the leadership development committee. We have to inform, train, teach, empower and support members, and I would like to ask IP Yvonne to take the lead in this respect in the coming biennium.



The SI Future African Federation SIFAF is progressing very slowly, and there are still many unresolved issues. To avoid the risk of a stalemate, we must start discussions at SI level on how to move forward. To inaugurate a new Federation, we need honest discussions between all parties. The current lack of certainty regarding SIFAF is not helpful for long-term planning for SIE nor for SIGBI, and this situation is not good for the members' perception of SI either. As the African countries have been working for many, many years to establish an African Federation, we must not allow the discussion to drag on. There will have to be negotiations between SIFAF - the applicant, and SI - the organisation they wish to join. Obviously, SI will involve SIE and SIGBI in these negotiations. And so SI faces another challenge!



I am very enthusiastic about my President's Appeal 2017-2019 – Women, Water & Leadership, which Hafdis and I will showcase later in this SI BM.



The culmination of my biennium will be the SI Convention 2019, in Kuala Lumpur. Anusha and I will be presenting this exciting event later in this meeting. Another absolute must!



Listening to my own plans, I fear that two years will not be enough! Nonetheless, I am looking forward to starting my biennium and will do my utmost to accomplish as much as possible. With your support we will jointly draft a strategic plan for 2019 – 2023 to secure a positive future for SI! I am delighted that Bev Becur has started as IDA and Hafdis Karlsdottir as ADA. I thank Gerda Huisman for taking on the task of Procedural Consultant, and I am grateful that Susanna Raccis has the courage to stay on as SI treasurer. She did a wonderful job in the last biennium, and although she is a very busy professionally, she has agreed to continue. Together with appointees who I hope will be approved later this meeting, this team will start from today – full of energy and enthusiasm.

Therefore, without further ado, I declare the 1st SI Board meeting 2017 – 2019 open.