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Global Summit of Women 2001 draws participants from 50 countries

With a spirit of enthusiasm, over 400 women business, entrepreneurial, and governmental leaders participated in the Global Summit of Women 2001, which took place in Hong Kong on Sept. 13-15, 2001.

South Africa had the largest representation with 71 delegates, including seven ministers. Despite the tragic events of Sept. 11, which disrupted the travel plans of many participants, nearly 50 countries were represented at the three-day event, focusing on fostering women's economic development by enabling participants to engage in cross-border business and professional relationships.

"It was remarkable to join with so many impressive women from throughout the world at this time of tragedy," summit director Irene Natividad said. "The meaning of the summit became even larger than coming together to enhance women's economic empowerment or to improve one's own business."

Keynoting the summit's opening ceremony at the Hong Kong Academy of Performing

Arts was Vietnamese Vice President Nguyen Thi Binh, who served as honorary co-chairman of the summit along with Costa Rican Vice President Astrid Fischel and Ugandan Vice President Speciosa Wandira-Kazibwe. The opening ceremony also featured co-hosts of the 2001 Summit Hong Kong Secretary for Information Technology and Broadcasting Carrie Yau and chair of the Equal Opportunities Commission Anna Wu, and Summit 2000 Co-Chair Deputy Minister for Trade and Industry Lindiwe Hendricks. Musical performances from South African singers and the Yip's Children Choir of Hong Kong rounded out an emotional and euphoric opening ceremony.

Thirty participants took part in a Parade of Leaders at the ceremony — each introducing themselves to all the delegates in a style which showed off the range of women's leadership present at the summit. The parade began with Ann Sherry, the first woman CEO of an Australian bank, and included several ministers from South Africa, Member of Parliament from

Iceland Jonina Bjartmarz and Member of Parliament from Tanzania Salome Mbatia, the director of the second largest company in Mongolia Petrovis Oil Co. Janchiv Oyungerel, the first exporter of seeds from Nepal Jamuna Kayastha, the founder of the first research and marketing firm in Egypt Loula Zaklama, and many others before ending with Ann Chiang, a member of the Political Consultative Congress of the People's Republic of China.

"It is interesting to learn more on the profile of Asian women and their marketing habits considering 90 percent of purchasing decisions are actually made by women worldwide," vice president of World Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (Philippines), Mina T. Gabor said. "This information is very useful when we go back to our home countries and start preparing business strategies of our own," Gabor who was speaker for 'Effective Marketing for Small and Medium Enterprises also moderated a session on Creating an Entrepreneurial Culture: The Nexus between Politics and Business.

As a direct result of the summit, Gabor also reported that an all-women South African trade mission is set to arrive in Manila before the end of the month to attend the Business Opportunities 2002, an annual conference organized by the Philippine Small and Medium Business Development Foundation, Inc. (PHILSMED) and