



**Speech by Dr. Jacqueline Badcock,**

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**United Nations**

**at the launch of Media Freedom Day & Launch of the Gender**

**Buzz Program, Madang, 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 2008**

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**Distinguished Guests, Faculty members, Students and  
Listeners,**

**I am delighted to be here to celebrate with you two  
important events - *the International Media Freedom Day*  
and the launch of a special FM100 radio programme on  
gender related issues – *the Gender Buzz (BEEZY)*  
*programme.***

**These two issues have great significance for me, both personally and professionally: the importance of media freedom and gender equality. *Not surprisingly both issues have a core theme of freedom imbedded in them.***

**As you know, May 3, was proclaimed World Press Freedom Day the UN General Assembly in 1993 following a Recommendation adopted at the twenty-sixth session of UNESCO's General Conference in 1991. It serves as an occasion to inform citizens of violations of press freedom - a reminder that in dozens of countries around the world, publications are censored, fined, suspended and closed down, while journalists, editors and publishers are harassed, attacked, detained and even murdered. Most of all, it is a date to encourage and develop initiatives in favor of press freedom, and to assess the state of press freedom worldwide.**

**Further, this day serves as a reminder to governments of the need to respect their commitment to press freedom and is also a day of reflection among media professionals about issues of press freedom and professional ethics. Just as importantly, World Press Freedom Day is a day of support for media which are targets for the restraint, or abolition, of press freedom.**

**To mark the Press Freedom Day, the Director General of the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture, UNESCO, Mr. KoiChiro Matsuura in his message said “press freedom and access to information feed into the wider development objective of empowering people by giving people information that can help them gain control over their own lives”.**

**Dear Listeners, here in PNG, it is not a coincident that we have decided to design a programme which has a special**

**focus that links directly to today's theme - *Freedom of Expression, Access and Empowerment*. I take this opportunity, to refer to the launch of the *Gender Buzz programme*. Gender, as you know is a complex issue of social and cultural norms that dictates the power structure of men and women in societies, their roles, rights, and most of all their vulnerabilities at the backdrop of poverty, social injustice, limitations in participating opportunities in building a nation and policy dialogue.**

**Mostly, the manifestations of these ill trends oppress women and girls more. The issues include, but are not limited to, women's lack of leadership opportunities, gender based violence, lack of opportunities for girl's to go to school, less access to acquire essential skills through training for women and girls to contribute to economic, political and social progress in PNG and the nation building process. *I believe in my heart, that this day,***

*commemorating the freedom of press is the right occasion where media can pledge a role amid the presence of the youth, to bring into focus the gender dimension through the **GENDE BUZZ** programme.*

**I would like to take this opportunity to remind all, that in the year 2000, national leaders including PNG Prime Minister committed themselves to promoting human rights and development by setting eight Millennium Development Goals by the year 2015, among which, *the MDG 3 is to promote gender equality.***

**Systematic discrimination against girls and women will make it impossible to meet the priority goal to halve the number of people living in extreme poverty by the year 2015. Women and girls form the majority of the world's poor and hungry, girls are dropping out of primary school at rates far greater than boys, and the spread of HIV**

**disproportionately affects women and girls. We are also lagging in our efforts to cut maternal mortality rates.**

**We all know that laws that discriminate against women are still on the books in virtually every country in the world. Legal disparities in the social, economic and political arenas are detrimental – and even sometimes devastating – to women. Statistics show that affirmative action measures help raise women’s political profile, especially in developing countries like PNG.**

**Dear Listeners, we need leadership at all levels: legal, institutional and personal. But even if we bring women into national political leadership, we must understand that this will not automatically promote women’s economic leadership, especially among the poor. We must encourage and train women to take leadership roles in local governance institutions, which generally make decisions**

**on policies and resource distributions that more directly affect poor women and men.**

**This is indeed a challenging task. Women, especially in developing countries, generally have only limited power over household economic decision-making. And they have limited voice in leadership structures that manage community resources or oversee local development projects. At the national and international levels, poor women are rarely represented or consulted in economic policymaking, planning, budgeting or monitoring. And at all levels, women are less represented than men in trade unions and social movements.**

**Dear listeners, in order to make any dent in the trends, we must ensure that girls go to school and stay in school. The benefit of girls' education has gathered global evidence to show that impact they bring to their families. We must**

**continue to ensure that children have equitable access to basic education through creating awareness among parents about *the value of education*, particularly for girls.**

**Dear Listeners, this brings to another issue very pertinent to PNG and which is taking the Nation backwards. Efforts that help achieve gender equality and development must be supported by action to end violence against women. The persistence of this problem is one of the major constraints to women's economic and political leadership at all levels.**

**Domestic violence against women is one of the most widespread and systematic violations of human rights, eroding women's health, productivity and independence to the detriment of countries' efforts to overcome poverty and foster inclusive development. Violence against women and girls negatively affects prospects for achieving the**

**MDGs on poverty, education, gender equality, maternal and child health and halting the spread of HIV and AIDS.**

**Freedom from violence, especially for girls and women, is a core right essential to their ability to lead a productive life.**

**Empowering women is not just an end in itself; it is a prerequisite for reaching all of the Millennium Development Goals in PNG – our common vision shared by the PNG Government and the United Nations and reflected in the PNG Medium Term Development Strategy and the UN Country Programme Action Plan 2008 - 2012.**

**Dear Listeners, Delivering on this vision is a challenge for all of us and in this effort, media and press have a very important role to play. Let me now take this opportunity to extend warm thanks to FM100 in agreeing to be part of this meaningful program. I am confident that this**

**program will not only provide a forum for open public dialogue but also greatly improve our understanding and appreciation of gender equity as an important pillar in nation building.**

**Let me also convey my thanks to Brother Michael McManus and the Communication Arts department of DWU for extending us an invitation to this event and allowing us to launch the Gender Buzz Program. A warm thank you also to you students, for making this event so enjoyable. To you listeners, if you are listening in, I encourage you to follow the radio programme and share with us your comments and suggestions so that we could improve the programme to make it an interesting public forum for dialogue on these important issues of gender.**

**Thank you.**