

Women around the world

From Shirley Randell March 2014

Isabel Allende has been elected as the first woman to lead *Chile's* Senate. When **Michelle Bachelet** takes office this month as President of *Chile* for the second time, she represents perhaps what is the most visible progress in women's rights in Latin America in recent years – the rise of women in power.

There is also *Brazil's* President **Dilma Rousseff**, who heads the region's largest economy and is running for re-election this year, while in *Argentina*, **Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner**, has been at the helm since 2007.

Today, women lead four Latin American and Caribbean countries - *Argentina*, *Brazil*, *Costa Rica* and *Jamaica*. While *Costa Rica's* President **Laura Chinchilla** was not eligible to run for re-election, Bachelet's taking office will keep that figure at four.

Catherine Samba-Panza, former Mayor of Bangui has been appointed *Central African Republic's* (CAR) first female President of a Francophone African country. She vowed to "safeguard the peace, strengthen national unity, ensure the wellbeing of the Central African people, and conscientiously fulfill my work without any ethnic, regional or religious considerations", and called on both Christian and Muslim fighters to lay down their weapons. A large number of Rwandan troops are part of the UN-CAR peacekeeping mission. Christian Bernis Latakpi, 24, a university student, said he hoped that Samba-Panza would be just the change that the country needed after months of bloodshed. "Since independence, men have always run the country and they have failed at the job," he said. "Now, we're going to try something else with a woman and see how that goes. We're looking to her to quickly bring security and to reunite our Muslim and Christian brothers. Because the Muslim Central Africans, they were born here, grew up here and we can't disown them. Now it's up to the mother to reconcile these different communities."

Tanzania President **Jakaya Kikwete** has appointed two women to powerful cabinet positions as the country prepares to enact a new constitution. **Saada Mkuya** becomes the new finance minister, the second woman to head the ministry; and former UN Deputy Secretary-General **Asha-Rose Migiro** was appointed minister in charge of constitutional and legal affairs.

Matteo Renzi, the new Prime Minister of *Italy* has nominated a Cabinet made up of 50 percent women. His new Foreign Minister, **Federica Mogherini**, has pushed to set up an Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, the first time development in Italy has actually been under a specific agency. We have lost that initiative in Australia under the new government.

Dr Sima Samar, my brave friend, Chair of the *Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission*, was awarded the Allard Prize for International Integrity for her work as an advocate for human and women's rights in Afghanistan.

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Japanese car manufacturer *Honda* has appointed its first female board member, **Hideko Kunii**, a professor of engineering, following in the footsteps of General Motors that appointed its first female CEO in December last year.

Somayya Jabarti has been named editor-in-chief of the English language *Saudi Gazette*, the first female to be appointed as the editor of a national newspaper in the country. "There's a crack that has been made in the glass ceiling. And I'm hoping it will be made into a door," she told *Al Arabiya news*. "The success will not be complete unless I see my peers who are also Saudi women in the media take other roles where they are decision-makers."

Joy Kere has been appointed *Solomon Islands'* first female high commissioner and first *SI high commissioner to New Zealand*.

The defence ministers of [Norway](#), [Sweden](#), *the Netherlands* and *Germany* are all women, signaling a new era where even posts most considered as belonging to men are no longer closed to talented women.

In February in Australia we saw the gathering of the G20 finance ministers and central bankers from the world's most powerful economies, still mostly men. Two outstanding women were with them at the centre of negotiations about global economic and financial stability: **Christine Legarde**, the first female finance minister of a developed country and now first Managing Director of the *International Monetary Fund*, the powerful body that puts stabilisers on the world's financial system, and **Janet Yellen**, the first woman to chair the century-old *US Federal Reserve*, the world's most influential central bank.

Greetings of peace to you all - Shirley

Prof Shirley Randell AO, PhD

FAICD, FAIM, FACE

Managing Director, SRIA Rwanda Ltd (Shirley Randell International and Associates)

Strong hearts, Strong minds, Strong women.

PO Box 4802, Kigali, Rwanda

1102 Hyde Park Plaza, 38 College Street, Sydney, NSW 2000

Mob: [+250788308967](tel:+250788308967) (Rwanda)

[+61419005936](tel:+61419005936) (Australia)

mail@shirleyrandell.com.au

www.shirleyrandell.com.au

www.facebook.com/cgcdkie

www.sriarwanda.com