

Geena Davis
Founder, Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media
Press Conference Remarks
International Corporate Philanthropy Day
The United Nations
New York, New York

February 22, 2010

[Check against delivery.]

As Founder of the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, and its programming arm, See Jane, it is a great honor to be a partner with UNIFEM, working together to achieve one of UNIFEM's key strategic goals: advancing gender equality in the media.

At the dawn of a new millennium – in a world that is over 50 percent female -- the message the media sends is that women and girls have far less value than men and boys. Research provided us with some stunning findings: there are *three* male characters for every *one* female character across all film ratings -- including G-rated films, aimed toward our youngest children.

And the vast majority of female characters that *are* there are stereotyped and hyper-sexualized. Consider this: female characters in G-rated films wear virtually *the same amount* of sexually revealing clothing as female characters in R-rated films. What message are we sending both boys and girls about women's role in society?

That's why I launched the Institute. Armed with our research, we work as partners with the decision makers of children's entertainment to encourage and foster a dramatic improvement in the gender balance our youngest children see.

The invisibility, hyper-sexualization, and disempowerment of women and girls in media cry out for change; but as we know, change doesn't happen easily. In fact, where gender equality is concerned, the tendency has been for progress to utterly stall. That dismal ratio of female to male characters in films has been the same since *1946*.

I am proud to join with UNIFEM, the UN, and their many public and private partners to help spotlight the importance of positive gender representations in media from an early age to help achieve the Millennium Development goals, and to ensure its long-term viability.

Real change happens when you reach the tipping point, and it will take all of us, working together, to get there.

I'll close with a word from Charles Malik, former president of the United Nations General Assembly: "The fastest way to change society is to mobilize the women of the world."

Thank you.