

## Council of Women World Leaders Biographies

**Michelle Bachelet**

**President, Chile 2006-2010**



Michelle Bachelet is the current Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women and was the former President of Chile, the first woman to hold the presidency. A moderate Socialist, her presidential campaign was based on a platform of continuing Chile's free market policies, while increasing social benefits to help reduce the country's gap between rich and poor, one of the largest in the world. In 2007, Forbes magazine ranked her as 27th in the list of the 100 Most Powerful Women in the World. Prior to becoming President, Bachelet served as Minister of Health and Minister of Defense (the first Latin American woman to hold the post) under President Ricardo Lagos. Bachelet has also worked for the Pan-American Health Organization, the World Health Organization, and Chile's National AIDS Commission. Bachelet is a surgeon, pediatrician, and epidemiologist, and has a Master's degree in Military Science. Bachelet has three children and speaks Spanish, English, French, German, and Portuguese.

**Gro Harlem Brundtland**

**Prime Minister, Norway, 1981, 1986-1989, 1990-1996**



Gro Harlem Brundtland was Norway's first and only female Prime Minister and is an international leader in sustainable development and public health. Before becoming Prime Minister, Brundtland worked as a physician in the Norwegian Directorate of Health and in Oslo's public health service. She also served as Minister for Environmental Affairs from 1974-1979. In 1998, Brundtland was elected Director-General of the World Health Organization, a post which she held until 2003. At the WHO, Brundtland established a Commission on Macroeconomics and Health and spearheaded the movement, now worldwide, to achieve the abolition of smoking. Under her leadership, the WHO was one of the first major employers to require freedom from tobacco addiction as a condition of employment. She now serves as a United Nations Special Envoy on Climate Change, and is a member of The Elders and the Club of Madrid. Brundtland was recognized in 2003 by Scientific American as their *Policy Leader of the Year* for coordinating a rapid worldwide response to stem outbreaks of SARS, and in 2004, *The Financial Times* listed Brundtland as the 4<sup>th</sup> Most Influential European of the Last 25 Years, behind Pope John Paul II, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Margaret Thatcher. Brundtland and her husband have four children.

**Micheline Calmy-Rey**

**President of the Federal Council, Switzerland, 2007, 2011**



Micheline Calmy Rey was Switzerland's 2<sup>nd</sup> female President. Before her election to president, she held the post of Vice-President of Switzerland. She has also served as a member of the Swiss Federal Council since 2002, where she heads the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. From 1981-1997 Calmy-Rey served as a representative in the Grand Council of the canton of Geneva as a member of the Social Democratic Party, and was president of the Geneva section of the party from 1986-1990 and 1993-1997. She was president of the Geneva section of the party from 1986-1990 and again from 1993-1997. Calmy-Rey is married with two children.

**Susanne Camelia-Römer****Prime Minister, Netherlands Antilles, 1993, 1998-1999**

Susanne Camelia-Römer served as the Minister of Justice for the Netherlands Antilles beginning in 1992. She was elected Prime Minister in 1998 and after her year in office she served as Vice-Premier until 2002 while leading her party.

**Kim Campbell****Prime Minister, Canada, 1993**

Kim Campbell was the first and only Prime Minister of Canada, and only the second woman to sit at the table of G8 leaders. Campbell began her political life as a trustee, chair, and vice-chair of the Vancouver School Board in the early 1980s. She has also served as Minister of State for Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Canada's first female Minister of Justice, Attorney-General, and Minister of National Defense. From 1996-2000, Campbell served as Consul General to Los Angeles. Before her political career, Campbell lectured part-time in political science at the University of British Columbia and at Vancouver Community College. Since the end of her term as Prime Minister, Campbell has served as President of the International Women's Forum, Chair of the Council of Women World Leaders, and as a board member with the International Crisis Group and several other international organizations. She is also a founding member and Secretary-General of the Club of Madrid. Campbell has been listed as one of the 50 Most Important Political Leaders in History in the National Geographic Society's *Almanac of World History*. She has received numerous honorary fellowships and doctorates and is a bestselling author. Campbell currently resides in France.

**Violeta Barrios de Chamorro****President, Nicaragua, 1990-1997**

Violeta Barrios de Chamorro was the first and only female president of Nicaragua, and the first Latin American woman elected to the office by election. Chamorro was involved in the Sandinista revolution in 1979, and after nearly a decade of civil war and economic sanctions, Chamorro was chosen as the presidential candidate of the National Opposition Union, a coalition that ran against and defeated the Sandinistas and then-President Daniel Ortega. Although the alliance broke up after the election, Chamorro brought peace to Nicaragua, worked to strengthen political institutions, and instituted a number of military and economic reforms. After her term ended, Chamorro left politics and now lives at home in the Nicaraguan capital of Managua.

### **Laura Chinchilla Miranda**

**President, Costa Rica, 2010-Present**



Laura Chinchilla Miranda was elected Costa Rica's first female President in May of 2010. Before she became a politician, she was an NGO consultant in Latin America and Africa, focusing on judicial reform and public security issues. Due to her expertise, she went on to serve in the José María Figueres Olsen administration as vice-minister for public security (1994–1996) and minister of public security (1996–1998). From 2002 to 2006, she served in the National Assembly as a deputy for the province of San José. Prior to serving as President, she was a Vice-President for the Oscar Arias Sanchez administration and was his administration's Minister of Justice. Chinchilla graduated from the University of Costa Rica and received her Master in Public Policy degree from Georgetown University.

### **Tansu Çiller**

**Prime Minister, Turkey, 1993-1996**



Tansu Çiller is an economist and politician who served as Turkish Prime Minister from 1993-1996. She entered politics in November 1990, joining the True Path Party, and was elected to Parliament in 1991 as deputy of her hometown of Istanbul, where she served as Minister of State for Economics. In 1993, she became the leader of the True Path Party and the Prime Minister of the coalition government. As Prime Minister, Çiller's major achievement was the transformation of the Turkish Army into a modern fighting force. The coalition government collapsed in 1996, but Çiller remained involved in politics, serving as Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1996-1997. Çiller retired from political life in 2002. Before her she entered politics, Çiller served as an economics professor at several universities and as President of the Istanbul Bank. She is married with two children.

### **Helen Clark**

**Prime Minister, New Zealand, 1999-2008**



Helen Clark served three successive terms as Prime Minister of New Zealand and has been active in the New Zealand Labour Party for much of her adult life. She served as a member of the Party's New Zealand executive committee from 1978 until September 1988 and again in April 1989. She has been an Executive Member of the party's Auckland Regional Council, Secretary of the Labour Women's Council, and a member of the Policy Council. In 1987, Prime Minister Clark became a Cabinet Minister in New Zealand's Fourth Labour Government, first as Minister of Housing and as Minister of Conservation, then as Minister of Health and later as Deputy Prime Minister. When her party came into office as part of a coalition following the 1999 election, she was elected Prime Minister. Under her tenure, New Zealand saw significant improvements; the minimum wage was raised six times, the welfare system has improved, and there has been sustained and stable economic growth, including a reduction in unemployment. The Honorable Clark has been ranked one of the Most Powerful Woman in the World by *Forbes*, and has been honored numerous times for her policies and actions. The government of the Solomon Islands awarded Prime Minister Clark the Star of the Solomon Islands in 2005 in recognition of New Zealand's role in restoring law and order in the Solomon Islands, and in January 2008 she was awarded the United Nations Environment Programme Champions of the Earth award. In March 2009, the General Assembly of the United Nations confirmed the appointment of Prime Minister Clark as head of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a post she holds today.

**Edith Cresson****Prime Minister, France, 1991-1992**

Edith Cresson was appointed Prime Minister in 1991 by President Francois Mitterrand, and served for a term of one year, in which she was known for making outspoken and controversial comments. Prior to becoming Prime Minister, Cresson served as Deputy National Secretary of the Socialist Party, Member of the European Parliament, Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Trade, and Minister for Industry and Development. From 1995-1999, she was the European Commissioner for Education, Research, and Social Services.

**Maria Das Neves****Prime Minister, São Tomé and Príncipe, 2002-2004**

Maria das Neves was appointed as the archipelago of Sao Tome and Principe's first woman Prime Minister after the former Prime Minister, Gabriel Costa, was fired. The President at the time asked Neves, a 44-year old economist, to form a new government. She was proposed for the post by the Sao Tome and Principe Liberation Movement (MLSTP) party. Neves was Minister for Trade, Industry and Tourism in the former administration, and before that she worked for the World Bank and UNICEF.

**Luísa Dias Diogo****Prime Minister, Mozambique, 2004-2010**

Luisa Dias Diogo became the first woman Prime Minister of Mozambique in 2004, representing the country's FRELIMO party, which has ruled the country since the nation's independence in 1975. During her time in power, she was especially focused on gender equality and women's empowerment. Prime Minister Diogo has urged African health ministers to offer reproductive and sexual health services free of charge throughout the continent. She recently launched the MUNIPA network, which brings together women ministers and parliamentarians to strengthen advocacy and lobbying activities in favor of gender equality legislation. Prior to becoming Prime Minister, Diaz was Minister of Planning and Finance, a post which she held until 2005. Before that, she served as head of Mozambique's Finance Industry and Director of the National Budget, a World Bank program officer, and Deputy Finance Minister.

**Ruth Dreifuss****President, Switzerland, 1999**

Ruth Dreifuss is a member of the Swiss Social Democratic Party and was the first woman ever to become President of the Swiss Confederation. Dreifuss has also served as the Secretary of the Swiss Trade Union and a member of the Swiss Federal Council representing the canton of Geneva. After her term as Prime Minister, she served as head of the Federal Department of Home Affairs until 2002. Before entering politics, Dreifuss worked as a journalist and then a scientific expert at the Federal Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. She holds a Master of Economics from the University of Geneva.



## **Vigdís Finnbogadóttir**

**President, Iceland, 1980-1996**



With her election as President of Iceland in 1980, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir became the first female head of state in the world. She was subsequently reelected three times and retired in 1996. Finnbogadóttir took an active role in promoting the country, acting as a cultural ambassador, and enjoyed immense popularity. Prior to entering politics, Finnbogadóttir worked with the Reykjavik Theatre Company, and taught French at several different institutions and through a show on Icelandic state television. She also served as member of the Advisory Committee on Cultural Affairs in the Nordic Countries. After her presidency, she became founding chair of the Council of Women World Leaders. In 1998, she was appointed president of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology. Currently, she is a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, and a member of the Club of Madrid. Finnbogadóttir holds honorary Degrees from fifteen universities around the world.

## **Julia Gillard**

**Prime Minister, Australia 2010-Present**



Julia Gillard was sworn in as the 27<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister of Australia in June of 2010. Prior to serving as Prime Minister, she worked in various political roles. After graduating from college, she worked as a solicitor in Melbourne with the law firm Slater and Gordon and became a partner in 1990, focusing on employment law. From 1996 to 1998, she served as Chief-of-Staff to the then Opposition Leader of the State of Victoria, John Brumby. She was elected to the Federal seat of Lalor for the Australian Labor Party in 1998. From 1998 to 2001, she served on the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Workplace Relations. In 2001, she was appointed Shadow Minister for Population and Immigration and subsequently took on responsibilities for Reconciliation and Indigenous Affairs in 2003. From 2003 to 2006, she was Shadow Minister for Health. On December 4, 2006, she became Deputy Leader of the Australian Labor Party and served as Shadow Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Social Inclusion. Following the victory of the Labor Party in the 2007 elections, she was sworn in as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education; Employment and Workplace Relations and Social Inclusion before becoming Prime Minister. She received an arts and law degree from the University of Adelaide and became involved in a campaign against education funding cuts. In 1983, she moved to Melbourne to complete her degree at Melbourne University.

## **Pamela Gordon**

**Premier, Bermuda, 1997-1998**



Pamela Gordon, was the first woman and the youngest person to hold the Premier (Prime Minister) position in Bermuda. At the age of 41, she had already lived an eventful life, giving birth to a child at the age of 16 and overcoming the economic obstacles posed by early motherhood by working in a variety of jobs. However, Gordon had two good things for her: she was the daughter of one of the founding fathers of Bermuda politics, and she had considerable political skills of her own. She used these resources in steering the United Bermuda Party to victory. Before becoming First Minister, she was appointed Minister of Youth Development and later she served as Minister of environment, planning and recreation.

## **Dalia Grybauskaitė**

## **President, Republic of Lithuania, 2009-Present**



Dalia Grybauskaitė is the current President of the Republic of Lithuania, elected on May 17, 2009. After completing her studies in economics, she worked as a lecturer on political economy and the world history of money. In 1993, she became Director of the Economic Relations Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A year later she was appointed the Extraordinary Envoy and Plenipotentiary Minister at the Lithuanian Mission to the EU. She returned to Lithuania in 1999 and in the same year started working as Deputy Minister of Finance and later became Minister of Finance. In 2004, Grybauskaitė was appointed EU Commissioner in charge of financial programming and budget of the European Union. After spending one-year in the European Commission, she was elected "Commissioner of the Year 2005." The President speaks four foreign languages: English, Russian, Polish, and French and is fond of classical music, she likes to spend her leisure time reading and going in for sports.

## **Tarja Halonen**

## **President, Finland, 2000-2012**



On March 1, 2000, Tarja Halonen was inaugurated as president of Finland, the first woman to have won that office. As a student at the University of Helsinki, she served (1969–70) as social affairs secretary and general secretary of the National Union of Finnish Students. After earning a degree in law in 1970, she began her professional career as an attorney with the Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions. Halonen entered politics in 1974, when she became parliamentary secretary to Prime Minister Kalevi Sorsa. Halonen later became chair of the Finnish National Organization for Sexual Equality. From 1977 to 1996 she was a member of the Helsinki City Council, and in 1979 she was elected to Parliament as a candidate of the SDP. While retaining her parliamentary seat, Halonen broadened her experience in domestic and international politics by holding a number of Cabinet posts. Before her appointment as foreign affairs minister (1995-2000), she had served as minister of social affairs and health (1987–90), minister for Nordic cooperation (1989–91), and minister of justice (1990–91). Halonen is currently Chair of the Council of Women World Leaders.

## **Sheikh Hasina**

## **Prime Minister, Bangladesh, 1996-2001 and 2009-Present**



Prime Minister Hasina was born on Sept. 28, 1947, in the village of Tungipara. She was the daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who led Bangladesh to independence from Pakistan in 1971. While at the University of Dhaka in the late 1960s, she became active in politics and served as her father's political liaison while he was imprisoned by Pakistani rulers. Prime Minister Hasina and other members of her family were also forced into captivity briefly in 1971 after they participated in an uprising during the liberation war. On Aug. 15, 1975, Hasina's father, mother, and three brothers were assassinated in their home by Bangladeshi military officers. Prime Minister Hasina spent six years in exile. During this time she was elected to a leadership position in the Awami League, the largest political organization in Bangladesh. On her return home in 1981, Prime Minister Hasina immersed herself in the fight for democracy which resulted in numerous house arrests. The Awami League led by Sheikh Hasina reclaimed power at the next election in 1996 but lost to the Bangladesh Nationalist Party again in 2001. Undaunted, Sheikh Hasina led her party in the 2008 general elections during which she vowed to build a "Digital Bangladesh" by 2021. The Awami league won the elections on December 29, 2008 with an overwhelming majority and Sheikh Hasina was named Prime Minister of Bangladesh. She continues to serve in that capacity today.

## **Atifete Jahjaga**

## **President of Kosovo, 2011-Present**



While Atifete Jahjaga is the fourth President of Kosovo, she is the first female, first non-partisan candidate, and the youngest to be elected to the office. Prior to her role as President, she served as Deputy Director of the Kosovo Police, holding the rank of Major general, the highest among women in Southeastern Europe. On April 6, 2011, she was announced as a consensual candidate for president of Kosovo by the Democratic Party of Kosovo, Democratic League of Kosovo and New Kosovo Alliance, and supported by the US Ambassador in Kosovo, Christopher Dell. On April 7<sup>th</sup>, she was elected President on the first round of voting by the Parliament; to date, she is the only president to be elected on the first round of voting. She graduated from the University of Pristina Faculty of Law in 2000. In 2006 and 2007, she attended a graduate certificate program in police management and criminal law at

the University of Leicester in the United Kingdom. She has also received extensive professional training at the George C. Marshall European Centre for Security Studies in Germany and the FBI National Academy in the United States.

## **Ellen Johnson Sirleaf**

## **President, Republic of Liberia, 2006-Present**

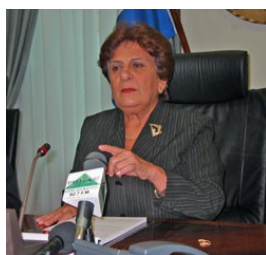


Johnson Sirleaf comes from a family of political activism; her father was the first indigenous Liberian to sit on the national legislature. Johnson-Sirleaf received a Bachelor of Science in Accounting in 1964 from the University of Wisconsin in Madison, an economics diploma from the University of Colorado in 1970, and a Master of Public Administration from Harvard University in 1971. Johnson-Sirleaf served as assistant minister of finance (1972–73) under President William Tolbert and as finance minister (1980–85) in Samuel K. Doe's military dictatorship. During Doe's regime she was imprisoned twice and narrowly avoided execution. In the 1985 national election she campaigned for a seat in the Senate and openly criticized the military government, which led to her arrest and a 10-year prison sentence. She was

released after a short time and allowed to leave the country. During 12 years of exile in Kenya and the United States, she became an influential economist for the World Bank, Citibank, and other international financial institutions. From 1992 to 1997, she was the director of the Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Development Programme. In 2003, she Johnson-Sirleaf returned to Liberia to chair the Commission on Good Governance, which oversaw preparations for democratic elections. She was elected President in the 2005 presidential election and took office in January 2006. She is Liberia's first elected female president and often referred to as the "Iron Lady". On November 5, 2007, President George W. Bush awarded Johnson-Sirleaf the Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award given by the United States.

## **Emily de Jongh-Elhage**

## **Prime Minister, Netherlands Antilles, 2006-2010**



Emily de Jongh-Elhage is currently the fifth female Prime Minister of the Netherlands Antilles. She entered the political arena in 1995 as a member of the Party for the Restructured Antilles (PAR). After being nominated as a member of the Island Council of the Curaçao government for the PAR, she served as the President of the Preparatory Committee of the Council and later as the Commissioner of Public Works and Public Housing for the island of Curaçao. She was elected leader of the PAR in 2005 and won the elections for Parliament in 2006. She was sworn in as Prime Minister in 2006. Before entering politics de Jongh

worked as a teacher until 1982 and then as a prominent real estate agent. She currently serves as a board member of several society and charity foundations as well as sports organizations on the island of Curaçao.



**Cristina Fernández de Kirchner****President, Argentina, 2007-Present**

In 2007, Fernández was elected as Argentina's first ever elected female President. Since she was a student at the Universidad Nacional de La Plata, she has been a staunch supporter of the Justicialista Movement and has been committed to defending Human Rights. From 1989 to 1995, she served as Provincial House Representative in the Province of Santa Cruz and Chair of the Constitutional Affairs, Authorities and Regulations Committee. In 1990, she was the First Vice-Chair of the House of Representatives of the Province of Santa Cruz. In 1993, she was re-elected to her position as Provincial House Representative. One year later, she became a Member of the National Constituent Convention for the Province of Santa Cruz. From 1997 to 2001, Fernández represented the Province of Santa Cruz as Vice Chair of the Education Committee at the House of Representatives, Congress of the Nation, and in 1998, she was a Member of the Provincial Constituent Assembly for the Province of Santa Cruz. In 1999, she became Chair of the Special Bicameral Committee in charge of following up the investigation related to the attacks on the Israeli Embassy and the AMIA Building. In 2000, she became Second Vice-Chair of the House of Representatives (Congress of the Nation) Special Investigation Committee concerning illegal acts related to money laundering. From 2001 to 2005, she served as National Senator for the Province of Santa Cruz. In 2009, *Forbes* ranked Fernández the 11<sup>th</sup> Most Powerful Woman in the World.

**Mari Kiviniemi****Prime Minister, Finland, 2010-2011**

Mari Kiviniemi served as Prime Minister of Finland from 2010 to 2011 following the resignation of Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen, making her the second female prime minister in the history of Finland. Prior to her appointment as Prime Minister, Kiviniemi was Minister of Foreign Trade and Development from 2005 to 2006 and Minister of Public Administration and Local Government from 2007 to 2010. Kiviniemi successfully ran to be a Member of Parliament in 1995 general elections and won a seat from the Southern Ostrobothnia district. Kiviniemi is a career politician, and in 2003, Kiviniemi was elected to a leadership position within the Centre Party, serving as vice-chairman (one of three) until June 2008. She became a special advisor to Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen in 2004, and was twice appointed by him to serve as a Cabinet minister: first in September 2005 on a temporary basis and then on a full-time basis in April 2007. In addition to her work in national politics, Kiviniemi is also a member of the Helsinki city council since 2005. She enrolled in the University of Helsinki in 1988 to study economics and has a masters in Social Work. In addition to her native Finnish, she speaks Swedish, German and English.

**Jadranka Kosor****Prime Minister, Croatia, 2009-2011**

Jadranka Kosor is the former Prime Minister of Croatia, taking office on July 6, 2009 after the resignation of Prime Minister Ivo Sanader. She was Croatia's first female Prime Minister since independence. In 1995, Kosor became a representative in the Croatian Parliament as a member of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) and was also the vice-president of the Croatian Parliament. From 1999 to 2000, she was president of the HDZ's Women's Association. Kosor was the vice-president of the HDZ party between 1995 and 1997, and from 2002 up to 2009, when she became the president of the party again. In 2003, she became the minister in the Croatian department for Family, Veterans and Inter-generational Solidarity in the Croatian Government of Ivo Sanader. In July 2009, she took over as the head of the Croatian Democratic Union following the resignation of Ivo Sanader. On July 6, 2009, Kosor was confirmed as the



first female Prime Minister in the Republic's history. Prior to her work in politics, she worked as a journalist for *Večernji list*, Radio Zagreb, and briefly for the BBC. She has won awards from the Croatian Journalist Association for her work, as well as from the European Community for her humanitarian work. Kosor has published four books, two of poetry and two related to the Croatian War of Independence. Her academic career began at Zagreb, where she graduated in law.

### **Chandrika Kumaratunga**

**President, Sri Lanka, 1994-2005**



Chandrika Kumaratunga, born on June 29, 1945, was the fifth President and the first female President of Sri Lanka. She served as the leader of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party until the end of 2005. She took up politics in the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and in 1974 became an Executive Committee Member of its Women's League. Following the Land Reform in Sri Lanka in 1972- 1976, she was Additional Principal Director of the Land Reform Commission (LRC). She also served in various other capacities during this time, including as Chairman of the Janawasa Commission, which established collective farms, and as a consultant to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). After her husband Vijaya

Kumaratunga was assassinated, she left the country for the UK, working for UNU-WIDER (United Nations University-World Institute for Development Economics Research). In 1993, after returning to Sri Lanka, she was elected as the Chief Minister of the Western Province of Sri Lanka in a land slide election victory. Kumaratunga herself was elected Prime Minister of a People's Alliance (PA) government on August 19, 1994 and President in the presidential election held shortly thereafter in November.

### **Doris Leuthard**

**President, Federal Council of Switzerland, 2010**



Doris Leuthard has been a member of the Swiss Federal Council since August 1, 2006. From August 2006-October 2010, she was head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, otherwise known as the economic minister. Since November 2010, she has been the head of the Federal Department of Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications, and she was elected President of the Confederation for 2010. Leuthard also served in various other roles, including as a member of the Swiss National Council and President of the Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP/PDC). When Leuthard was elected to the Swiss Federal Council, she became the 109th member (and fifth woman). In 2009, Leuthard was elected Vice President of the Swiss Confederation, virtually assuring her election as president in 2010. She is the highest-ranking official in the Swiss order of precedence and can act on behalf of the whole Council in emergency situations.

### **Maria Liberia-Peters**

**Prime Minister, Netherlands Antilles, 1984-1986, 1988-1994**



Maria Liberia Peters was born on May 20, 1941 in Willemstad, Curacao, Netherlands-Antilles. She attended school and earned her degree in teaching in Holland. She later married Niels Liberia, a civil servant. Together they adopted two children. Maria Liberia Peters fell into politics almost accidentally during her work in the improvement of children's alongside teaching as her main profession. Her road to politics began in the 1970's, when she started groups for parents and became a member of the National People's Party. In 1975, after being encouraged by others to run for office she earned a seat on the Curacao Island Council where she stayed a member for the next five years. In 1982 she was appointed to the legislature of the Netherlands-Antilles as well as becoming the Minister of Economic Affairs. After the coalition government she worked under

collapsed in June of 1984, she agreed to form a new coalition and was elected as Prime Minister, a position that was hers from 1984-1986 and later from 1988-1994. After 1994, she still remained President.

### **Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo**

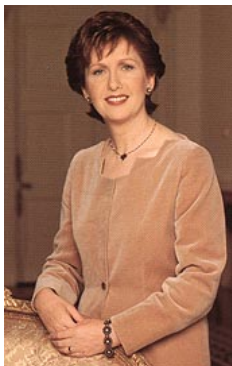
### **President, The Philippines, 2001-2010**



Maria Gloria Macaraeg Macapagal-Arroyo is the fourteenth president of the Philippines. She is the country's second female president, and the daughter of former President Diosdado Macapagal. A professor of economics, Arroyo entered government in 1987, serving as assistant secretary and undersecretary of the Department of Trade and Industry upon the invitation of President Corazon Aquino. After serving as a senator from 1992 to 1998, she was elected to the vice presidency under President Joseph Estrada, despite having run on an opposing ticket. After Estrada was accused of corruption, she resigned her cabinet position as Secretary of Social Welfare and Development and joined the growing opposition to the president, who faced impeachment, which never succeeded. Estrada was soon forced from office by peaceful street demonstrations, and Arroyo was subsequently sworn into the presidency on January 20, 2001. She was elected to a full six-year presidential term in her own right and was sworn in June 30, 2004. In 2009 *Forbes* named her 44<sup>th</sup> Most Powerful Woman in the World.

### **Mary McAleese**

### **President, Ireland, 1997-2011**



Mary Patricia McAleese is the current President of Ireland. Before becoming President, she was a barrister, journalist, and an academic. She is Ireland's second female president and the world's first woman to succeed another woman elected Head of State. Since November 19, 2005, she is the longest-serving female elected Head of State. On May 2007, she was awarded The American Ireland fund Humanitarian Award.

### **Beatriz Merino**

### **Prime Minister, Peru, 2003**



Beatriz Merino was the first female Prime Minister of Peru. She held office between June 23, 2003 and December 12, 2003. Before serving as Prime Minister, she graduated from Harvard with a Master's degree in law. Merino also is widely recognized for her expertise and work with women's issues. She was director of the Women's leadership program, now known as Gender Equality in Development Unit, at the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington D.C. to support and finance projects to enhance women's leadership in Latin America. Also she was member of the board of directors for the International Women Forum and a steering committee member for the Business Women's Initiative against HIV/AIDS. Merino also worked extensively in commercial, labor, corporate and environmental legislation. She was the first Peruvian woman to serve on the Commission of Andean Jurists. At Lima University, she was the director of foreign cooperation and of the Master's program on tax revenue and fiscal policies. She has authored two books, "Peruvian Women in

the XX Century Legislation" and "Marriage and Rape: Debate of Article 178 of the Peruvian Criminal Code." She currently serves as Peru's public ombudsman.

### **Angela Merkel**

**Chancellor, Germany, 2005-Present**



Angela Dorothea Merkel, born in Hamburg, is the Chancellor of Germany. Merkel, elected to the German Parliament from Mecklenburg-Vorpommern has been the chairman of the Democratic Union CDU since 2000, and Chairwoman of the CDU-CSU parliamentary party group from 2002 to 2005. Before getting involved in politics she earned a doctorate in physics and worked as a chemist at a scientific academy in East Berlin. Merkel is the first former citizen of the German Democratic Republic to lead the reunited Germany and the first woman to lead Germany since it became a modern nation-state in 1871. She is also, the youngest person to be German chancellor since the Second World War. Merkel is considered by Forbes Magazine to be the most powerful woman in the world. In 2008, she was awarded the Karlspreis (Charlemagne prize) for promoting European Unity.

### **Mireya Moscoso**

**President, Panama, 1999-2004**



Mireya Elisa Moscoso Rodriguez de Arias was the President of Panama from 1999 to 2004, representing the Arnulfista Party. She was Panama's first female president. Moscoso has an interior design diploma from Miami-Dade Community College in the United States, and she is the widow of former president Arnulfo Arias. She ran on a campaign to reduce poverty, improve education, and slow down the country's privatization process.

### **Kamla Persad-Bissessar**

**Prime Minister, Trinidad and Tobago, 2010-Present**



Kamla Persad-Bissessar is the current Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Mrs. Persad-Bissessar began her career in the teaching profession. While in England pursuing studies, she worked as a social worker with the Church of England Children's Society of London. She also taught at various institutions including the St. Andrew High School in Kingston, Jamaica, the Mona Campus in Jamaica, the St. Augustine campus of the University of the West Indies in Trinidad, at the Jamaica College of Insurance as a Consultant Lecturer, and at a Tertiary Education institution. After lecturing for a total of six years, Mrs. Persad-Bissessar then became a full-time Attorney-at-Law. In 1987, Mrs. Persad-Bissessar entered the political arena. From 1987 until 1991, Mrs. Persad-Bissessar served as an alderman for St. Patrick County Council. Representing the United National Congress in Opposition, she took the Oath of Allegiance at a sitting of the Senate on November 1, 1994. Since 1995 she has been the Member of Parliament for Siparia, serving as Attorney General, Minister of Legal Affairs and Minister of Education

between 1995 and 2001. The United National Congress returned to the Opposition benches in 2002 and on April 26th, 2006, Mrs. Persad-Bissessar was appointed Leader of the Opposition, the first woman to ever hold that position in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Mrs. Persad-Bissessar was appointed Leader of the Opposition a second time on February 25, 2010, almost one month after she was elected political leader of the United National Congress. On Tuesday May 26, 2010, two days after a victory at the polls, Mrs. Persad-Bissessar created history yet again, becoming the first woman to hold the office of Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. She studied at the University of the West Indies, Norwood Technical College (England,) and the Hugh Wooding Law School. Consequently, she was awarded a B.A. (Hons.), a Diploma in Education, a B.A. of Laws (Hons.) and a Legal Education Certificate. In 2006 she obtained an Executive Masters in Business Administration (EMBA) from the Arthur Lok Jack Graduate School of Business, Trinidad. Mrs. Persad-Bissessar is married to Dr. Gregory Bissessar and has one son.

### **Michèle Duvivier Pierre-Louis**

### **Prime Minister, Haiti, 2008-2009**



In 2008 Pierre-Louis became Prime Minister of Haiti, only the second woman to hold this position. While Prime Minister, Pierre-Louis also served as Minister of Justice and Public Security. Since her return to Haiti in 1976, she devoted special attention to improving literacy and adult education. She also held training sessions for traditional midwives, opened libraries, and made education her pet project. From 1979 to 1982 she served as Assistant Director of the Airport. She has also served in the private sector as Director of Credit at Bank of Nova Scotia (1976 to 1979) and Officer of Administration and Human Resources Finance Corporation to the Haitian Development (SOFHIDES - 1983 to 1984). In 1986 she became a National Trainer in the literacy campaign Mission Alpha. In 1991, President Jean-Bertrand Aristide entrusted her with the task of redefining the mission of the state and coordination between the Presidency and the Ministers, taking into account the demands of peasant organizations for agrarian reform. Since 1995 she has directed the Knowledge and Freedom Foundation (FOKAL) which defends the fundamental position that real change can only take place if those concerned become the main actors, it operates in the areas of education, culture, community development, environment, gender equity, civil society, and training of young entrepreneurs.

### **Kazimira Prunskienė**

### **Prime Minister, Lithuania, 1990-1991**



Kazimiera Prunskiene was born on February 26, 1943 and obtained her BA and PhD degrees in economics in the Vilnius University. She stayed on the same university first as an instructor and then a senior associate in the department of industrial economics. Prunskiene joined the Lithuanian Communist Party in 1980 and worked in West Germany during 1981 to 1986. She was elected as the first Prime Minister of Lithuania after the declaration of independence of March 1990. From 2004-2008 she was the Minister of Agriculture as well as leader of the Peasants and New Democratic Party Union.



## **Iveta Radičová**

**Prime Minister, Slovakia, 2010-2012**



Iveta Radičová is a former Prime Minister of Slovakia. As of March 2012, Iveta Radičová is retired from politics. During her political career she led the 2010 - 2012 Coalition government where she also held the post of Minister of Defence. Previously, she served as the Minister of Labour in the second Dzurinda's Government. Radičová began her political career in 1990 as a member of the Public Against Violence movement, serving as a spokesperson of the party until 1992. From 2005 to 2006, she served as Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family in the center-right government of Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda. Radičová was then elected as a member of the Parliament of Slovakia on the party list of Dzurinda's liberal-conservative Slovak Democratic and Christian Union-Democratic Party (SDKU-DS) in the 2006 parliamentary election. Following the 2006 election, Radičová officially became a member of SDKU-DS and was elected as deputy chairman of the party and as deputy chairman of the parliamentary committee on social affairs and housing. Radičová was installed as Slovakia's first female prime minister on July 8, 2010, heading a coalition government of SDKU-DS, SaS, KDH, and Most-Híd. Radičová has since retired from politics and is writing a book on her experience as Prime Minister. Radičová began her academic career studying sociology at the Comenius University in Bratislava, earning a PhD in 1981. Radičová worked as a sociologist at the Slovak Academy of Sciences from 1979–1989, coordinating a research team for family policies. In 1990, she pursued postdoctoral studies for a year at the University of Oxford. Upon her return to Slovakia in 1991, Radičová founded the Center for Analysis of Social Policy, one of Slovakia's first NGOs, and served as its executive director until 2005. During this period, Radičová also lectured in the departments of sociology, political science, and social work at Comenius University. In 2005, she was named a Professor of Sociology by the Faculty of Philosophy at Comenius University, making her Slovakia's first female professor of sociology. In addition to her native Slovak, Radičová speaks English and Russian fluently and has good knowledge of German and Polish.

## **Mary Robinson**

**President, Ireland, 1990-1997**



Mary Robinson was born on May 21, 1944 and was educated at Trinity College and King's Inns in Dublin and at Harvard University in the United States. She served at Trinity College as Reid Professor of penal legislation, constitutional and criminal law, and the law of evidence (1969–75) and lecturer in European Community law (1975–90). She was elected to the Royal Irish Academy and was a member of the International Commission of Jurists in Geneva (1987–90). She sat in the Seanad (upper chamber of Parliament) for the Trinity College constituency (1969–89) and served as whip for the Labour Party until resigning from the party over the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985. She was also a member of the Dublin City Council (1979–83). Robinson became Ireland's first woman president in 1990. Shortly before her term as president expired, she took up the post of UNHCHR. As high commissioner, Robinson changed the priorities of her office to emphasize the promotion of human rights at the national and regional levels; she was the first UNHCHR to visit China, and she also helped to improve the monitoring of human rights in Kosovo. In 2001 Robinson served as secretary-general of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa. Robinson founded the nongovernmental organization Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative, in 2002.

## **Dilma Rousseff**

**President, Brazil, 2011- Present**



Dilma Vana Rousseff is the 36th and current President of Brazil. She is the first woman to hold the office. Prior to that, in 2005, she was also the first woman to become Chief of Staff to the President of Brazil, appointed by then President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Rousseff became a socialist during her youth, and following the 1964 coup d'état joined various left-wing and Marxist urban guerrilla groups that fought against the military dictatorship. Rousseff was captured and jailed between 1970 and 1972 and reportedly tortured. After her release, Rousseff rebuilt her life in Porto Alegre with Carlos Araújo, who would be her partner for 30 years. Both helped found the Democratic Labour Party (PDT) in Rio Grande do Sul, participating in several of the party's electoral campaigns. She became the Secretary of the Treasury of the city of Porto Alegre in the Alceu Collares administration, and later the Secretary of Energy of the State of Rio Grande do Sul under both Collares and Olívio Dutra administrations. In 2000, she left PDT and joined the Workers' Party (PT). In 2002, Rousseff joined the committee responsible for the energy policy of presidential candidate Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who after winning the election invited her to become Minister of Energy. In 2005, a political crisis triggered by a corruption scandal led to the resignation of Chief of Staff José Dirceu. Rousseff took over the post, remaining in office until March 31, 2010, when she left in order to run for President. She was elected in a run-off on October 31, 2010. She is the first female elected President of Brazil, in addition to being the first economist to hold the office.

## **Jenny Shipley**

**Prime Minister, New Zealand, 1997-1999**



Jenny Shipley was the Prime Minister of New Zealand from 1997 to 1999, the first female head of government, and the only woman to serve as leader of the National Party. She was born on February 4, 1952 in the southern town of Gore, New Zealand, educated in Wellington and Blenheim. Prior to entering the politics, she taught in primary schools as well as served in a number of educational and child-care organizations. Jenny joined the National Party in 1975, and became Minister of Social Welfare, Minister of Health and Minister of Women Affairs successively from 1990 to 1996.

## **Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir**

**Prime Minister, Iceland, 2009-Present**



Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir is the current Prime Minister of Iceland. An MP since 1978, she was previously Iceland's Minister of Social Affairs and Social Security from 1987–1994 and 2007–2009. She has been a member of the Althing (Iceland's parliament) for Reykjavík constituencies since 1978, winning re-election on eight successive occasions. She became Iceland's first female Prime Minister and the world's first openly lesbian head of government on February 1, 2009. Jóhanna is a social democrat and Iceland's longest-serving member of Parliament. In 2009, Forbes listed her among the 100 Most Powerful Women in the world. She enjoyed early success in her parliamentary career, serving as deputy speaker of the Althing in 1979 and in 1983–84. She was elected vice-chairman of the Social Democratic Party in 1984, a post she held until 1993. She served as Minister of Social Affairs in four separate Cabinets from 1987 to 1994, when she left the Social Democratic Party to form a new party, National Awakening; the two parties remerged in 2000 to form the present Social Democratic Alliance. From 1994 to 2003, she was an active member of the opposition in the

Althing, serving on numerous parliamentary committees. After the 2003 elections, in which she stood in the Reykjavík South constituency (after the split of the old Reykjavík constituency), she was re-elected deputy speaker of the Althing. The 2007 elections, in which she stood in the Reykjavík North constituency, saw the return of the Social Democratic Alliance to government in coalition with the Independence Party, and Jóhanna was named Minister of Social Affairs and Social Security. Jóhanna was proposed as Prime Minister for the new government, among other things because of her popularity among the general public; an opinion poll by Capacent Gallup in December 2008 found 73% approval of her actions as a minister, more than any other member of the Cabinet. She was also the only minister to have improved her approval ratings over 2008. Jóhanna is known as the party leader that increased women's equality and paved the way for Nordic countries to take the lead in recognizing women as equal citizens.

### **Portia Simpson Miller**

**Prime Minister, Jamaica, 2006-2007 and 2012**



Portia Lucretia Simpson-Miller was the first female prime minister of Jamaica and also holds the position of president of the opposition People's National Party. She had been the Minister of Local Government and Sport since October 2002. She previously served as Minister of Labor, Welfare and Sports from 1989 to 1993, when she re-entered parliament for South West St. Andrew; she was first elected, for that constituency, in 1976. She was Minister of Labour and Welfare from 1993 to 1995, Minister of Labour, Social Security and Sports from 1995 to February 2000, and Minister of Tourism and Sports from February 2000 to October 2002. She was a Vice President of the PNP from 1978 to 2006. In appointing her first cabinet following her swearing-in, she also assumed the portfolio of defense minister. Simpson-Miller obtained her B.A. in public administration from the Union Institute and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters by the Union Institute.

### **Jennifer Smith**

**Premier, Bermuda, 1998-2003**



Jennifer Smith is the first elected female Premier of Bermuda, the first Bermuda Progressive Labour Party (PLP) Government Leader, the first PLP Minister of Education and the first women Deputy Speaker of the House of Assembly. She guided her political party to two successive General Election victories. As the youngest woman ever to run in a general election, she made her debut in 1972 just four years after universal adult suffrage had been implemented. With a strong commitment to education in preparing the youth of Bermuda for global competition, she leads the Government's partnership with the private sector and mandated B.TEC a national priority. Jennifer has received many awards, like "Woman of Great Esteem" Award from Q-Kingdom Ministries of New York and the National Congress of Black Women Inc. of Washington D.C.

### **Hanna Suchocka**

**Prime Minister, Poland, 1992-1993**



Hanna Suchocka was the prime minister of Poland between 1992 and 1993 under the presidency of Lech Waslesia, the only woman to hold this post so far. Suchocka has also served in various other political roles, including as a member of the Sejm of People's Republic of Poland in the 1980s and a member of the Club of Madrid.. Hanna Suchocka has been serving as Poland's Ambassador to the Holy See since December 2001 and is also a member of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences in the Vatican. In addition to these roles, Suchocka is also a specialist in Constitutional Law.

**Helle Thorning-Schmidt****Prime Minister of Denmark, 2011-present**

Helle Thorning-Schmidt is the current Prime Minister of Denmark. Prior to serving as Prime Minister, she was the leader of The Danish Social Democrats beginning in 2005. She also was a member of the European Parliament representing the Danish Social Democrats from 1999-2004. From 1997-1999, she was an International Adviser in LO for The Danish Confederation of Trade Unions. She began her career in 1994 as the Head of Office for The Danish Social Democrats in the European Parliament. Prime Minister Thorning-Schmidt received her Master of Political Science from the University of Copenhagen in 1994 and her Master in European Studies from the College of Europe in 1993.

**Yulia Tymoshenko****Prime Minister, Ukraine, 2005, 2007-2010**

Yulia Tymoshenko is currently the first female Prime Minister of Ukraine. Prior to her election, Tymoshenko played a key role in the Orange Revolution as an outspoken leader of the Ukrainian opposition to former president Leonid Kuchma's corrupt administration. She also has served as Chair of the Parliamentary Budget Committee and as Deputy Prime Minister of Fuel and Energy. She introduced important reforms in those positions, particularly ending much of the corruption in the energy sector. During her first term as Prime Minister she initiated bold attempts to re-privatize industrial assets. In 2005 Forbes Magazine named her the third most powerful woman in the world. Before becoming involved in politics, Tymoshenko directed several energy-related companies and served as president of United Energy Systems of Ukraine. She holds a PhD in economics.

**Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga****President, Latvia, 1999-2007**

Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga was born on Dec. 1, 1937 in Riga, the capital. She fled with her family to Germany and then French Morocco near the end of World War II after Soviet forces took over Latvia. In 1954 she moved to Canada, where she attended the University of Toronto and then McGill University, Montreal, earning a Ph.D. in experimental psychology in 1965. She worked (1965-98) as a psychology professor at the University of Montreal. In the meantime, she served on many councils and organizations in high positions, such as President (1980-81) of the Social Science Federation of Canada, President (1984-86) of the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies, and Vice President (1984-89) of the Science Council of Canada. In 1994, she was appointed a Member of Council and later president of the Academy of the Royal Society of Canada. She was also a Member of the Killam Research Fellowships and Prizes Selection Committee from 1995-1998. In 1998, upon her retirement from the University of Montreal, she moved back to Latvia, where she headed the nonprofit Latvian Institute, which promoted Latvian culture. In 1999, Vīķe-Freiberga was selected as President of Latvia, becoming the first female president of this country. She was succeeded by Valdis Zatlers in 2007. In 2008, Vīķe-Freiberga became a member of The European Council on Tolerance and Reconciliation.



**Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf****President, Switzerland, 2012**

Eveline Wildmer-Schlumpf is a Swiss lawyer, politician, and member of the Swiss Federal Council since 2008. She is the head of the Federal Department of Finance (the Swiss finance minister). She serves as President of the Swiss Confederation for the year 2012. She is the sixth woman to be elected to the Swiss Federal Council. She worked as a lawyer from 1987 to 1998. She was elected to the district court of Trin in 1985, presiding from 1991 to 1997. As a member of the Swiss People's Party, she was the cantonal legislative of Grisons 1994 to 1998, and in 1998 was elected to the cantonal government as the first woman, acting as president in 2001 and 2005. Widmer-Schlumpf was named as an alternative candidate to Christoph Blocher by the Christian Democrat, Social Democrat and Green fractions in the Swiss Federal

Council elections of December 12, 2007 and was elected federal councillor; she accepted her election on December 13, 2007. She assumed Blocher's old portfolio as head of the Department of Justice and Police. Following a reshuffle of portfolios after the by-election of two new councilors in 2010, Widmer-Schlumpf sat as the head of the Federal Department of Finance. In response to national leadership of the Swiss People's Party opposition, the former SVP Grisons section formed the Conservative Democratic Party of Switzerland. The SVP's Bern section, of which Schmid is a member, also joined the new party. Widmer-Schlumpf was elected Vice-President of the Confederation for 2011, alongside President-elect Micheline Calmy-Rey. On December 14, 2011 she was elected President of the Confederation in 2012. Widmer-Schlumpf received her degree in law at the University of Zürich in 1981 and her LLD in 1990.

**Khaleda Zia****Prime Minister, Bangladesh, 1991-1996 and 2001-2006**

Khaleda Zia was the Prime Minister of Bangladesh from 1991 to 1996 and then again from 2001 to 2006. She was the first women Prime Minister of her country. Begum Khaleda is the widow of assassinated President Ziaur Rahman. Since his death, she leads his old party, The Bangladesh Nationalist Party. In 2006 she was ranked by Forbes as the 33th most powerful women in the world. The government of Khaleda Zia made tangible progress in empowering huge numbers of rural womenfolk in the countryside, as well as major reforms in education, including introduction of free and compulsory primary education, tuition-free education for girls up to ten, stipend for female students and the Food for Education. She has two sons and gardening is among her favorite hobbies.

**In Memoriam:**  
**Corazon Aquino****President, Philippines, 1986-1992 d.2009**

Maria Corazon was the 11th President of the Philippines, the first woman to hold that office, and the first female president in Asia. She led the 1986 People Power Revolution, which toppled Ferdinand Marcos and restored democracy in the Philippines. She was named "Woman of the Year" in 1986 by *Time* magazine. A self-proclaimed "plain housewife," Aquino was married to Senator Benigno Aquino, Jr., the staunchest critic of then President Ferdinand Marcos. After her husband's assassination on August 21, 1983,

upon returning to the Philippines after three years in exile in the United States, Corazon Aquino emerged as the leader of the opposition against the Marcos administration. In late 1985, when President Marcos called for a snap election, Aquino ran for president with former senator Salvador Laurel as her vice-presidential running mate. After the elections were held on February 7, 1986, and the Batasang Pambansa proclaimed Marcos the winner in the elections, she called for massive civil disobedience protests, declaring herself as having been

cheated and as the real winner in the elections. Filipinos enthusiastically heeded her call and rallied behind her. These events eventually led to the ousting of Marcos and the installation of Aquino as President of the Philippines on February 25, 1986 through the "People Power Revolution". As President, Aquino oversaw the promulgation of a new constitution, which limited the powers of the presidency and established a bicameral legislature. Her administration gave strong emphasis and concern for civil liberties and human rights, and peace talks with communist insurgents and Muslim secessionists. Aquino's economic policies centered on bringing back economic health and confidence and focused on creating a market-oriented and socially responsible economy. Aquino's administration also faced a series of coup attempts and destructive natural calamities and disasters until the end of her term in 1992. Succeeded by Fidel V. Ramos as President in 1992, Aquino returned to private life although she remained active in the public eye, often voicing her views and opinions on the pressing political issues. In 2008, Aquino was diagnosed with colon cancer from which she died on August 1, 2009. Her son Benigno Aquino III was elected president and was sworn in on June 30, 2010.

### **Benazir Bhutto**

**Prime Minister, Pakistan, 1988-1990, 1993-1997, d.2007**



Benazir Bhutto was born on June 21, 1953 in Pakistan. She was the eldest child of former minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. She completed her early education in her country, and then got her BA degree in Radcliffe College at Harvard University in USA and MA degree in Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Oxford University. In 1976 she was elected president of the Oxford Union, becoming the first Asian woman to head this prestigious society. After her father's execution, she became a leader of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), her father's party. Bhutto was selected Prime Minister for the first time in 1988 at the age of 35, becoming the first and youngest woman in this position, and re-elected in 1993. She was assassinated on December 27, 2007, after departing a PPP rally in Rawalpindi, two weeks before the scheduled Pakistani general election of 2008 where she was a leading opposition candidate.

### **Sirimavo Bandaranaike**

**Prime Minister, Sri Lanka 1960-1965, 1970-1977, 1994-2000, d.2000**



Sirimavo Bandaranaike was born into a prominent family on April 17, 1916 and was educated at St Bridget's Convent, Colombo. She married the politician S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike in 1940. After her husband, who became prime minister in 1956, was assassinated in 1959, she became the leader of Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) in replace of her husband. Bandaranaike served Prime Minister of Sri Lanka for three times, 1960-1965, 1970-1977 and 1994-2000, the world's first female prime minister. Her children are also major political figures: her daughter, Chandrika Kumaratunga, is the third president of Sri Lanka, and her son, Anura Bandaranaike, is the former speaker and minister.

### **Dame Eugenia Charles**

**Prime Minister, Dominica, 1980-1995, d.2005**



Dame Eugenia Charles was the Prime Minister of Dominica from July 21, 1980 until June 4, 1995. She was the first female prime minister in The Caribbean, and the first woman elected in her own right as head of government in North America. Eugenia Charles studied overseas; she went to the University College of the University of Toronto and received a B.A. in law. She continued her studies of law at the London School of Economics and Political Science. When she returned home in 1949, she became the first woman lawyer on this Caribbean island. She began campaigning in

politics during the 1960's against restrictions on press freedom. She helped to found the Dominica Freedom Party, which she served as leader from the early 1970's until 1995. She was elected to Parliament in 1970. The most important issues to her were social welfare programs, anti-corruption measures and individual freedom. Dame Eugenia Charles died from surgery complications on 6 September 2005, aged 86.

## Janet Jagan

**President, Guyana, 1997-1999, d.2009**



In 1997, Janet Jagan made history, becoming the first female president of Guyana. Prior to her time as President, she worked with her husband, Cheddi Jagan, in his dental practice in Guyana in 1943. Shortly after, the couple got deeply involved in the country's labor movement. In addition to joining British Guiana Labour Union, Janet Jagan did some organizing of domestic workers with labor leader Hubert Critchlow. She also helped establish the Women's Political and Economic Organisation in 1946. In 1950, Janet and Cheddi Jagan were instrumental in creating the country's first modern political party, the People's Progressive Party (PPP). Janet became the organization's secretary general, a post she would hold for nearly 20 years. One of the party's goals was the liberation of Guyana from British rule since the South American nation had been a British colony since the late 1700s. The PPP made an impressive showing at the 1953 elections, winning a majority of seats in the country's first popular vote. Fearing the PPP's Marxist leanings, the British government removed the organization from power after only 133 days. The constitution was also suspended. Two years later, both Janet and Cheddi Jagan spent time in jail as political prisoners. They were vindicated in a way by the 1957 elections, in which the Guyanese people selected Cheddi their chief minister and Janet as their minister of labor, health, and housing. While still under British control, the PPP government tried their best to improve the lives of the people. Janet Jagan worked on creating health centers and special clinics for pregnant women and children as well as tackling issues regarding workers' pay and treatment. The clash between political parties got so bad that the Jagans decided to send their daughter Nadira to live abroad for a time. Still they remained committed to their work. Janet became the minister of home affairs in 1963, but she gave up the post in protest a year later. In 1966, Guyana achieved independence from Great Britain, but in the following years, there were concerns about the fairness of elections held in the country. Jagan served on an election committee in 1967 and complained about the possible rigging of elections. Also around this time, Jagan became an official citizen of Guyana. She had lost her U.S. citizenship in 1940s because of her Marxist beliefs. In the early 1970s, Janet Jagan became the editor of the *Mirror* newspaper, which was published by the PPP. She also co-founded the Union of Guyanese Journalists around this time. Always committed to public service, Jagan became an opposition member of Parliament in 1973 and was re-elected to her post in 1980 and in 1985. Guyana held its first truly free elections in roughly three decades in 1992. As a result, Cheddi Jagan became the country's new executive president. As the first lady of Guyana, Janet Jagan held several special positions. She spent several months as the country's ambassador to the United Nations in 1993 and chaired the National Commission on the Rights of the Child. After her husband's death in March 1997, Janet Jagan became the country's first female prime minister and first vice president. She also became the PPP's candidate for the elections held in December. After winning the election, Jagan became the first female president of Guyana. That same year, she won the Gandhi Gold Medal for Peace, Democracy and Women's Rights from United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). While she was forced to resign in 1999 for health reason, Jagan remains an active member of the PPP. Outside of politics, Jagan has written several children's books, including *Dog Who Loved Flowers* (2000), *Alligator Ferry Service and Other Stories from Guyana* (2001), and *Lure of the Mermaid and Other Children's Stories* (2002). She also contributes articles to the *Mirror*.

**Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo****Prime Minister, Portugal, 1979-1980, d.2004**

Maria de Lourdes Ruivo da Silva de Matos Pintasilgo was the first woman to serve as Prime Minister of Portugal. She was born in Abrantes, in The Tagus Valley. She joined Acao Catlica, Catholic Action, and during some years she joined and eventually led the Catholic's women student movement. After graduating from Lisbon's Higher Technical Institute, with an engineering degree in industrial chemistry she went into a graduate scholarship program with the National Nuclear Energy Board. After completing the program, she began working for a large Portuguese conglomerate. Some years later, she held a job in government, in which she was in charge of Portugal's Program for development and social change. She was appointed Secretary of State for Social welfare. After, she became Minister of Social Affairs and one year later, Portugal's first Ambassador to the UNESCO. In 1979, she was called on by General Antonio Ramalho Eanes, the President of Portugal, to become Prime Minister. She left her mark by making social security universal and improving health care, education and labor legislation in Portugal. Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo died of cardiac arrest at her home on July, 10<sup>th</sup> 2004.