



Reykjavik Global Forum – Women Leaders Power, Together for Leadership

Councillor Gillian Brooks

500 Conservationists from 80 countries joined for the sixth Reykjavik Global Forum, co-hosted with the Government and Parliament of Iceland, in partnership with Women Political Leaders (WPL), at the Harpa Concert and Conference Hall, Reykjavik, (pictured above).

The delegation spanned women from diverse backgrounds; The Prime Minister of Iceland, Ministers and Members of parliaments globally, Founders and Co-Founders of international Women's Organisations, United Nations, NATO, delegates from public and private sectors, academia and science partnerships, civil society and social entrepreneurship.

The Forum unite and empower women, advocate for women whose rights are restricted socially or economically, raise awareness of work done with gender imbalance, promote women in leadership roles and those who have progressed through personal trauma to become prominent, world recognised leaders.

I arrived in Iceland on Sunday, 12th November, the day after Iceland declared a state of emergency due to serious increasing concern over the hundreds of earthquakes that were been experienced and an impending volcanic eruption.

The only official engagement that Sunday, was the Welcome Reception at the home of the President of Iceland, where we were individually introduced to the President and First Lady.

Monday, the first day of the Forum, opened with the Welcome Address by the Chair and Co-Founder of the Reykjavik Global Forum and the Founder and President of the Women's Political Leaders (WPL).

The day was divided into discussion sessions, each led by panels made up from different countries or organisations. Whilst it would be too drawn out to go through in detail all of the sessions, I give below an understanding of topics covered:

Welcome – Power, Together for Leadership

Presented by a panel of women leaders from the Government and Parliament of Iceland, including the Prime Minister of Iceland.

The Reykjavik Index for Leadership 2023

Detailing work done since 2018 on the statistics of measuring the suitability of women in positions of power.

Reykjavik Action Items 2023

"The 4 'E's" - Equal Pay, Equal Representation, Equal Parental leave and Ending Gender Violence; what developments are been done for business and legislators to action change in mind-set and resources to enable more women to access the workplace.

The World in Focus: Snapshot of where we are now

This year we are in global conflict and economic difficulties. Discussion was on developments crucial to gaining global stability.

Climate Crisis: response in a more responsible world

Conversation was on the necessity for an international reaction to climate-induced migration across the world, due to extreme weather events. Very relevant to this discussion was that Iceland was in the grip of a pending volcanic eruption at that very time.

Responsible Energy: a source for a more sustainable future

Iceland's progress to almost entirely renewable energy and the changes that will drive renewable energy as the model for our future.

Cost of Living and the wellbeing economy

The panel spoke of the increasing level in cost of living and the effects on society, be it in large countries or in communities as small as we are here in St Helena. Discussion was around the diminished quality of life in families and the social effects on women.

Fireside chat with Ashley Judd

Ashley Judd is an Actor, Activist and Co-Chair of the Forum and she spoke of personal trauma in her life that shaped the person she has become. This was, in my opinion, a very emotional session and demonstrated progress over adversity.

Representation Matters

This is an initiative from the WPL's group who had studied the growth in a country's economic condition, where women have been instrumental in policy-making and legal roles.

Icelandic Barbershop Chat: how can men fight for gender equality?

An all-male panel of Icelandic men who discussed the importance of men supporting gender equality and creating an equal balance for women to lead in society.

Why economic power is a vital sign for women's health

This session addressed the effect on women's health and wellbeing when they are in financial positions that enables them to be ambitious and make decisions that determines how they lead their lives.

The Long Haul: how can we ensure women retain power?

Reversing the trend of women resigning from positions of leadership. Discussed were several high profile cases brought to light this year.

Day two very much followed the agenda of day one with 15-20 minute sessions:

The Nordic Edition of the Reykjavik Index for Leadership

Showing the comparison of women leadership in the Nordic region to the rest of the world.

How can we super-charge investment in women-led ventures

A discussion on the gender imbalance between male and female-led companies in investment.

Little Leaners, Big Impacts: how early years education shapes gender perception

There was a video shown of children aged 5 – 7 in different areas of the world, who were asked to draw and name several different professions, i.e. fire-person, surgeon, rally driver, police person etc. All of the children drew male characters with male names. Each school had a visit from a representative of the sections above who were all females. The reaction of the children showed surprise and disbelief that women could hold such powerful positions. This exercise emphasised how vital gender balance is in education at an early age.

Spotlight: Female Ambassadors in Iceland "women on the front line but not at the table"

A question /answer session on women serving as ambassadors in countries where there is a balance in gender, as compared to their counterparts in countries that are affected by war and conflict.

Creativity for policy change

Driving changes to policies and innovative ways to influence decision making.

The Forum concluded with the **WPL Trailblazer Awards**, where presentations were made to former women Presidents, Prime Ministers and women who are known world-wide for breaking “glass ceilings” to rise to the highest level of political leadership.

That evening, which was the end of the Forum, we were invited to attend a Farewell Gathering in the iconic Geothermal ‘Sky Lagoon’.

“I was very honoured to have the opportunity to attend this Forum on behalf of St Helena and as a member of the CPA team in attendance. Here on St Helena, we are privileged not to have issues with women in positions of power, but that is what we have to offer at forums such as these.

I used the opportunities when we were put into smaller groups or breakout sessions to speak about St Helena, where are we located, our population size, our lifestyle, it all adds a bit more to raising awareness of St Helena”.