



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Maria Teresa, Grand Duchess of Luxembourg, named honorary member of Zonta International**

**[OAK BROOK, ILLINOIS, 9 March 2022]**— Zonta International announced today that it would award Her Royal Highness Grand Duchess Maria Teresa of Luxembourg an honorary membership in the organization, which works around the world to empower women and girls through service and advocacy.

“Zonta International is greatly honored and privileged to welcome Grand Duchess Maria Teresa to honorary membership in recognition of her efforts to elevate women and girls and support survivors of gender-based violence,” said Zonta International President Sharon Langenbeck.

“I am very honored to receive the title of Honorary Member of Zonta International and to stand by your side,” said Her Royal Highness the Grand Duchess. “As you know, I have always been defending rights for women and girls because I am convinced that their place in our society will strongly determine our common future. Equality in law and in fact, education for young girls, economic independence for women, and the fight for the elimination of violence against girls and women are major issues but also the only way to a peaceful world and a more equitable future.”

She continued: “Women hold the key to change the world for the better and we must support them in achieving their goals. It is a battle that will be won project by project, village by village, but it is essential to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls because, beyond a fundamental right, it is the foundation of a more just and sustainable world.”

Because of her work to promote education, women’s rights and microfinance initiatives, Grand Duchess Maria Teresa was appointed a goodwill ambassador for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1997. In her role, she works to give women the means to be autonomous and defend their rights.

The grand duchess is the president of the [\*Fondation du Grand-Duc et de la Grande-Duchesse\*](#) (Grand Duke Henri and the Grand Duchess Maria Teresa Foundation), which was created in 2004 by the merger of two previous organizations. The foundation focuses on helping children with learning disabilities and supporting single moms and survivors of domestic abuse, also helping people in situations of vulnerability.

In 2019, the grand duchess organized the “Stand, Speak, Rise Up” conference, which raised awareness of the atrocities experienced by sexual violence survivors, marking an important step in the international awareness of the tragedy of rape as a weapon of war. This international conference was the first to give a voice to nearly fifty survivors, who were able to speak about the atrocities they suffered, thereby putting an end to this attitude of rejection and exclusion, in presence of many international experts and three Nobel Prize winners.

In recognition of Her commitments, H.R.H. was awarded the title of "Champion of the Fight against Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Support of United Nations Advocacy" by the United Nations in 2021.

The grand duchess is chairwoman of the international jury of the European Microfinance Award, which annually awards holders of microfinance and inclusive finance initiatives in developing countries and honorary president of the Luxembourg Fund Labeling Agency, the first agency to label responsible microfinance investment funds around the world.

As a UNICEF eminent advocate for children since 2007, a title only held worldwide by Queen Rania of Jordan and the Grand Duchess of Luxembourg, she focused on the issues of children impacted by conflict and more particularly for children incarcerated in Burundi, for common crimes. Thanks to her action, the Grand Duchess has succeeded in freeing 600 minors detained in inhumane conditions. After that, these children benefited from psychological, legal, medical, social and educational assistance.

To date, Her Royal Highness the Grand Duchess is the only one to hold three United Nations titles: Goodwill Ambassador (UNESCO), Eminent Advocate for Children (UNICEF) and Champion of the Fight against Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (UN). But she is also the Patron of Luxembourg Committee for UNICEF and supports UNESCO's Breaking the Poverty Cycle of Women project, which improves the lives of women, girls and their families in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan.

The Zonta International Board awards lifelong International Honorary Membership to individuals who have helped to change societal attitudes about women or have improved conditions for women beyond the national level. Since 1970, Zonta International has recognized 42 women for their significant contributions to advancing the status of women worldwide.

*Zonta International ([www.zonta.org](http://www.zonta.org)) is a leading global organization of professionals empowering women worldwide through service and advocacy. More than 27,000 members in 63 countries work together to make gender equality a worldwide reality for women and girls. Zonta International has provided more than US\$59 million to empower women and girls and expand their access to education, health care, economic opportunities and safe living conditions.*

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