

FACT SHEET

ABOUT HER WORLD WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

An annual award presented since 1991, it honours a woman who has made an outstanding contribution to society, whether in her profession, the arts, business, politics, community service or sports.

Criteria:

She must have achieved largely due to her efforts, and whose achievements have brought her to the public notice in 2007. She must also project the best image of Singapore at home or abroad, and her accomplishments will leave a lasting impression, such that she is always an inspiration and a role model for other women.

Winner:



NOELEEN HEYZER (DR)
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE
PACIFIC (ESCAP)

Biodata

Age : 59 in 2007
Marital statue : Married
No. Of Children : 2

Achievements in 2007

- She was appointed to head the United Nations Economic and Social Programme for Asia and the Pacific (Escap) in July, making her the first Singaporean woman in the UN system to hold the rank of undersecretary-general. Escap is the regional arm of the [United Nations](#) Secretariat for the Asian and Pacific region and is the biggest of the UN's five regional commissions, both in terms of population served and area covered.
- With her move to another high-profile appointment to head Escap in 2007, the spotlight has also been thrown on the significant strides she has made, in terms of women's rights, in the past decade with Unifem. She has championed women's issues within the UN and the Security Council for more than a decade and is credited with putting issues affecting women high on the agenda of the United Nations

Education / Awards / Scholarships

- **2005:** She was a nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize.
- **2005:** She received the National Council for Research on Women (NCRW) "Women Who Make a Difference" Award
- **2004:** She received the Dag Hammarskjöld Medal, given to "a person who has promoted, in action and spirit, the values that inspired Dag Hammarskjöld as Secretary-General of the

United Nations and generally in his life: compassion, humanism and commitment to international solidarity and cooperation."

- Born in Singapore, she received a Bachelor of Arts and a Masters of Arts from the University of Singapore, and a doctorate in social sciences from Cambridge University in the United Kingdom.
- She has received several awards for leadership including the UNA–Harvard Leadership Award and the Woman of Distinction Award from the UN–NGO Committee on the Status of Women.

Professional Experience

- **2007:** Appointed to head the United Nations Economic and Social Programme for Asia and the Pacific (Escap) in July, making her the first Singaporean woman in the UN system to hold the rank of undersecretary-general.
- **2006:** She worked with Unifem Goodwill Ambassador, actress Nicole Kidman, in October when both went on a trip to Kosovo.
- **1994 – 2006:** She was executive director of the UN Development Fund for Women (Unifem), the leading operational agency within the United Nations to promote women's empowerment and gender equality. She worked on strengthening women's economic security and rights, promoting women's leadership, ending violence against women and combating HIV/Aids. Through her leadership, Unifem assisted countries to formulate and implement legislation and policies to realise women's security and rights and led, in one instance, to the inclusion of women as full citizens in the Constitution of Afghanistan and as full participants in several peace negotiations and electoral processes. Since her arrival in 1994, Unifem had also doubled its annual resource base and strengthened its strategic partnerships between women's groups, governments, and bilateral donors.
- **1994 - 1995:** She played a key role in the preparatory process for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, including organizing 1000 NGOs in the Asia Pacific region to develop the first ever NGO Action Plan.
- She worked as a researcher for the World Employment Programme of the International Labour Organisation (ILO).
- She was director of the Gender Programme of the Asia and Pacific Development Centre, serving as policy adviser to several Asian governments on gender issues, playing a key role in the formulation of national development policies, strategies and programmes from a gender perspective. She has done extensive work at the community level with women migrant workers, women in the informal sector and in plantations, young women in prostitution, female workers in free trade zones, rural and indigenous communities affected by environmental degradation.

Community Contribution

- She is a founding member of numerous regional and international women's networks and has published extensively on gender and development issues: Especially economic globalization, international migration and trafficking, gender and trade, and women, peace and security.
- She has served on numerous boards and advisory committees of international organizations, including the UNDP Human Development Report, the Commission on Globalization of the State of the World's Forum, and the UNDP Eminent Persons Group on Trade and Sustainable Development.

- She convened and chaired the International Women’s Commission for a Just and Sustainable Palestinian-Israeli Peace.
- She served on the Board of President Ahtisaari’s Crisis Management Initiative.
- She was a New Millennium Distinguished Visiting Scholar at Columbia University in New York, an eminent speaker at the Asian Development Bank and Chairperson of the Advisory Group of the Programme on Women’s Empowerment in Muslim Contexts: Democratization from the Inside Out.
- She successfully mobilized private sector partners such as Macy’s, CISCO, Citigroup and the Calvert Investment Fund to provide high value employment and market access to women and youth in conflict and tsunami-affected areas, and to the Arab States, as well as to set new standards for ethical investment.

Extras / Quotes

“What inspired me to do this work? I just feel that this is such a beautiful world and it really, really deserves the best of the human spirit. And one of the things that I've tried to do in my life is to look for the light and the best in human beings, and to make sure that all of that light becomes the leadership for the world.”

“It is not acceptable for women to constitute 70 percent of the world's 1.3 billion poor. Nor is it acceptable for women to work two-thirds of the world's working hours, but earn only one-tenth of the world's income and own less than one-tenth of the world's property. Many fundamental changes must be made.”

Why Her

- For her significant achievements in championing women’s issues and ending female oppression on a global scale.
- For being the first Singaporean woman in the UN system to hold the rank of Under-Secretary-General.

Past Years' Winners

1991 Professor Chan Heng Chee
1992 Dr Kanwaljit Soin
1993 Mrs Hedwig Anuar
1994 Mrs Leaena Tambyah
1995 Mrs Yu-Foo Yee Shoon
1996 Mrs Fang Ai Lian
1997 Mrs Elizabeth Sam
1998 Ms Claire Chiang
1999 Ms Jennie Chua
2000 Dr Jennifer Lee
2001 Ms Chng Seok Tin
2002 Ms Olivia Lum
2003 Mdm Halimah Yacob
2004 Ms Annabel Pennefather
2005 Ms Euleen Goh
2006 Ms Lim Soo Hoon

Her World Woman of the Year Special Award

1999 Teresa Hsu