



Ottawa, March 4, 2011

Dear colleagues,

This year, the world celebrates the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day. First celebrated in Europe on March 8, 1911, the day draws attention to the major contribution of women to societies around the world. More than one million women and men gathered in 1911 to end discrimination and to support women's rights to work, vote, and have access to higher education.

While International Women's Day was initiated as a unique opportunity to celebrate the contribution of women, it has also served as a reminder of the enormous inequities and discrimination that continue to exist around the world.

Today, throughout the world, more than 300,000 women die annually due to complications during pregnancy or childbirth. Almost all of these deaths occur in developing countries and the vast majority of them are avoidable. The United Nations Millennium Development Goal that sets targets for improved maternal health has shown the slowest progress of all eight goals.

The Canadian Nurses Association continues to collaborate with other non-governmental associations and governments to address this inequity and to ensure a rights-based approach to maternal health, both internationally and in Canada, especially among First Nations, Inuit and Métis populations.

Please join me in celebrating the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day and in making sure that nurses' efforts and voices are seen and heard to achieve a more just and equitable society.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Judith Shamian".

Judith Shamian, RN, PhD, LLD (hon), D.Sci. (hon), FAAN  
President, Canadian Nurses Association