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Wednesday, May 20, 2009

### **RUSSIAN TENNIS STAR VERA ZVONAREVA NAMED UNESCO-SONY ERICSSON WTA TOUR, PROMOTER OF GENDER EQUALITY**

**Olympic medalist joins Venus Williams, Billie Jean King, Tatiana Golovin and Zheng Jie as a global promoter of efforts to create leadership opportunities for women**

**PARIS, France** – Sony Ericsson WTA Tour star Vera Zvonareva has been named a "Promoter of Gender Equality" as part of the Sony Ericsson WTA Tour's partnership with UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. In this role she joins fellow current Sony Ericsson WTA Tour stars Venus Williams (USA), Tatiana Golovin (France) and Zheng Jie (China) who were previously named as Promoters of Gender Equality for the programme in November 2006, May 2007 and September 2007, respectively, as well as Tour founder and legend Billie Jean King, who was named "Global Mentor for Gender Equality" in November 2008.

Zvonareva, a winner of nine singles and five doubles titles on the Sony Ericsson WTA Tour had the best year of her career in 2008, firmly establishing herself in the top 10 where she currently resides as world No 6. The 24-year-old already has a keen interest in education and international leadership having enrolled in the Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2007 where she is studying for a post-graduate diploma in International Relations and Economics. In her new role as a Promoter of Gender Equality, Zvonareva will raise awareness of gender equality issues at both a national and global level, and have a direct involvement in current and future women's leadership programmes to be developed through the UNESCO-Sony Ericsson WTA Tour partnership.

"I am truly honored to be serving as a Promoter of Gender Equality, especially being the first one from Russia," said Zvonareva. "I think that the UNESCO-Sony Ericsson WTA Tour partnership is incredibly important and this is a role that I value highly and will work extremely hard in helping young girls and women all around the world to gain better opportunities to succeed in whatever they wish to do. In particular I very much believe in the importance and value of education and the rights of all women and girls to have equal access to it."

"I am very happy to announce today that Ms. Vera Zvonareva is being designated as the fourth UNESCO Promoter of Gender Equality within the framework of the UNESCO-Sony Ericsson WTA Tour Partnership for Gender Equality, joining Ms. Venus Williams, Ms. Tatiana Golovin and Ms. Zheng Jie," said UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura. "As leaders and role models for women and girls around the world, these formidable athletes and successful women are a source of inspiration in their deeds both on and off the court, driving the message that gender equality is a goal that can and must be realized in order for us to achieve peace and sustainable development."

"Great strides have been made in recent years to improve the role of women in society but many challenges still remain," said Stacey Allaster, President of the Sony Ericsson WTA Tour. "Through our partnership with UNESCO, we seek to show the world that women deserve the same possibilities as men and to create real leadership opportunities for women and girls. I am delighted that Vera Zvonareva will be taking a leadership role herself in this valuable initiative."

The UNESCO/Sony Ericsson WTA Tour partnership draws upon the history of the Tour and players in fighting for equality, and marks a new level of commitment by the Tour and players to raise awareness of gender equality issues and advance opportunities for women. The programme also represents the first time that UNESCO, with its global mandate for



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education, science, culture and communication/information which are most critical for laying the grounds for gender equality, and which in turn benefit from gender equality, is partnering with a professional sports league for this objective embraced by all world leaders (2005 World Summit Outcome document).

Since the launch in November 2006 of the landmark global partnership between UNESCO and the Tour to further gender equality and promote women's leadership in all spheres of society, a substantial amount of funds has been raised or pledged; a series of programmes have been launched and funded; a global TV and print advertising campaign has been developed; Sony Ericsson tournaments have initiated advocacy, awareness and funding raising activities on behalf of the Partnership; and global "Promoter of Gender Equality" Venus Williams has been joined by Tour stars Tatiana Golovin of France and Zheng Jie of China as well as Tour founder and legend Billie Jean King.

The programme, supported both through financial contributions and the Partnership's player "Promoters of Gender Equality", are designed to create real opportunities for women and girls to assume leadership roles, as well as to raise awareness and promote the goal of gender equality. Programmes previously announced and now being implemented include:

- In Liberia, a project that creates a women-only night school program for 1000 girls, and trains female teachers to staff the programme, in an effort to further equal access to quality primary and secondary education for disadvantaged women in post-conflict Liberia.
- In Cameroon, a project that works to create a group of successful female politicians, business women and athletes who will organize various events and activities in support of women's leadership and gender equality.
- In China, a project that aims to raise the percentage of rural women involved in local affairs and promote a more balanced decision making process.
- In the Dominican Republic, a programme that advocates for women's social and political leadership through awareness raising activities and capacity building and training programs. One of these programmes is training 80 young women between the ages of 18-28 in participative leadership skills to encourage them to rise to top positions in civil society and political organizations.
- In Jordan, a legal rights awareness program, consisting of 24 legal training workshops throughout the country, is designed to empower women to know their rights
- In the US, a Billie Jean King leadership internship program with the Women's Sports Foundation

Key elements of the programme include (i) a Sony Ericsson WTA Tour/UNESCO Fund for Women's Leadership, (ii) a "Promoter of Gender Equality" player program, which involves players as role models at both a global and national level in advocacy and awareness raising activities as well as direct involvement in specific gender equality and women's leadership programs throughout the world, (iii) mentoring, scholarship and fellowship programs designed to support women's individual leadership and provide them with the opportunities to succeed in all walks of life, (iv) advertising to raise awareness of and promote the internationally recognized goal of gender equality, and (v) usage of UNESCO and Sony Ericsson WTA Tour tournaments, social events and conferences as advocacy, awareness and fundraising platforms.

For UNESCO, gender equality is a fundamental human right, a commonly shared value, and a necessary condition for the realization of sustainable development, human rights and peace at global, regional and local levels. This is why UNESCO has designated gender equality as one of its two global priorities in all of its fields of competence: Education, the Natural Sciences, Social and Human Sciences, Culture and Communication and Information. In particular, UNESCO seeks to



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integrate a gender equality perspective into all stages of its program cycle from conceptualization to implementation and evaluation as well as to promote the full and equal participation of women at all levels and in all areas of UNESCO's action. In this endeavor, UNESCO has a wide range of initiatives in all its domains as well as special partnership programmes with the private sector, such as the L'Oreal-UNESCO "For Women in Science" programme (<http://www.loreal.com/en/ww/index.aspx>),. With DaimlerChrysler, UNESCO has forged the highly successful Mondialogo Partnership, which promotes intercultural dialogue among schools and students through concrete projects ([www.mondialogo.org](http://www.mondialogo.org)).

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### ABOUT UNESCO

The **United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** was created on November 16, 1945. As a specialized agency of the United Nations, UNESCO contributes to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information.

Paris-based UNESCO provides a platform where global challenges for humanity can be addressed on the basis of equality among Member States. Founded on the principles of universality, diversity and dignity, UNESCO's actions continue to be guided and shaped by a set of commonly shared values that include justice, solidarity, tolerance, sharing, equity, respect for human rights, including women's rights, and cultural diversity, pluralism and democratic principles. As mandated by its Constitution, UNESCO helps to build the defences of peace in the minds of men. Further information on UNESCO can be found on the internet at [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org) and the Partnership at [www.unesco.org/women](http://www.unesco.org/women) or [www.unesco.org/genderequality](http://www.unesco.org/genderequality).

### ABOUT THE SONY ERICSSON WTA TOUR

The Sony Ericsson WTA Tour is the world's largest premier professional sport for women with more than 2,200 players representing 96 nations competing for over \$86 million in prize money at the Tour's 51 events and four Grand Slams in 31 countries. More than 4.8 million people attended women's tennis events in 2008 with millions more watching events on television networks around the world. The Sony Ericsson WTA Tour season concludes with the Sony Ericsson Championships – Doha 2009 in Doha, Qatar, October 27 – November 1 and the inaugural Commonwealth Bank of Champions in Bali, Indonesia from November 4-8. Further information on the Tour can be found on the Internet at [www.sonyericssonwtatour.com](http://www.sonyericssonwtatour.com).



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