

Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP  
First Minister of Scotland



Scottish Government  
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A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dear Helen".

Thank you for your letter of 5 September inviting me to send greetings to the Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland's 83rd annual conference.

I would be delighted to provide a message of greetings, enclosed, to be relayed to attendees and would like to wish you the best of luck for what I hope will be a successful conference.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "For Helen".

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nicola".

**NICOLA STURGEON**

I am pleased to offer Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland's 83<sup>rd</sup> annual conference in Cardiff my greetings and best wishes.

The theme of this year's conference, Step Up and Lead the Way, is vitally important. The Scottish Government takes its responsibility to ensure that women are properly represented in our political and public institutions, and more widely in senior and decision-making, very seriously.

As you may know, the Scottish Government leads by example by having one of the very few gender-balanced Cabinets anywhere – with all Ministers appointed on merit. As women make up over 51% of our population it is only right that they should also occupy positions of leadership and that their voices are heard in decision-making spaces.

Leading by example is extremely important, but we know it's not enough in and of itself. We have to also take the right steps so that the path is that little bit easier for the next generation of women and girls. This is why the Scottish Government will continue to reaffirm its commitment to gender equality and take steps to make that a reality, including through:

- A transformative expansion of childcare and early years provision
- Action to address persistent pregnancy and maternity discrimination
- A range of measures to strengthen the law and support women who have experienced gender based violence
- The introduction of the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Bill to ensure that women are properly represented on our public boards
- The establishing of an Advisory Council for Women and Girls

I applaud the on-going work undertaken by the Soroptimists to help improve the lives of women and girls locally, nationally and internationally. Please accept my congratulations on all your achievements to date and my very best wishes for what I hope will be a successful conference.