

## **Greetings from the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon MSP to delegates of the 86<sup>th</sup> Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland Federation Conference**

I am pleased to offer delegates of Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland's 86<sup>th</sup> Federation Conference my greetings and best wishes.

I think this might be the very first of your conferences to go ahead as a virtual conference and with 1000 delegates expected I imagine this will be a new experience for some of you. But it is perhaps more important than ever to maintain the connections that we have with each other and the work that is important to us, even if we have to look for different and new ways to do so.

Since the first cases were reported in late 2019, Coronavirus has touched on all of our lives. Some of you may have lost someone close to you to the virus and I am deeply sorry for that and for every loss of life. Many of you are on the front line of our response, in hospitals and care homes or are supporting family members and friends in their homes and in our communities, whether in Scotland, the rest of the United Kingdom, Ireland or further afield. I am grateful to each and every one of you - thank you.

The theme of this year's conference "We Stand up for Women" is apt. Standing up for women and girls and challenging gender inequality in its many forms is at the heart of Soroptimist International's mission. Gender equality remains an unwon cause and we need to keep standing up for women and girls for as long as it takes.

Please accept my best wishes for what I hope will be a very successful and enjoyable conference and my thanks again for all of the hard work and dedication of Soroptimist International members in Great Britain and Ireland and around the world to improving the lives of women and girls and making a difference.