**President Pat Black’s Change of Insignia speech**

International President Ann, President Ulla, Soroptimists in Conference, Honoured Guests

I have to tell you this has been one of the most enlightening, educational and inspiring years of my life. I thank everyone who has contributed in any way and worked alongside me this year to help me achieve this, from my family to my Soroptimist friends; to our whole team of Federation representatives – the Management Board, the Federation Councillors, our advisers, the Conference Committee, the Programme Team, our partners and each and every member within this amazing organisation.

To be entrusted with leading such a dedicated team is very humbling and a great privilege. Everyone has taken up the challenge to ensure this organisation moves forward energetically into the 21st century to continue to provide service in every part of our Federation. And you have put Programme Action at the heart of everything you are doing. You have truly been changing our Soroptimist Vision into Action; Educating to Lead.

Over the year I have shared food – lots of it! I have shared fun, I have shared friendship and made new friends. I have laughed, and partied and danced and sung along with so many sister Soroptimists, their friends and families.

I have met amazing women who have faced adversity, met and overcome challenges, who have received awards, been recognised and valued by everyone from the Queen, from their countries, from their communities.

I have seen fantastic projects transforming our Soroptimist Vision into Action. The projects undertaken demonstrate commitment and enthusiasm on the part of every Soroptimist. They include environmental projects, projects which care for the young and the old, dedicated service to every community where there is a Soroptimist member.

Projects which provide education,

training,

social care,

maternal care,

health and dental services,

community support services.

They cover every part of our Soroptimist Vision, Mission and Goals.

Last year I challenged you to increase the numbers of women and girls having the opportunity to access education freely and safely. I challenged you to educate yourselves. I have seen primary schools and secondary schools supported and sustained on a long term basis by Soroptimists giving opportunities for education where there are no others.

Members have raised awareness and educated communities on a huge range of health issues as well as providing water supplies and toilets for schools and their communities. Clubs have worked with women of all ages to enable them to gain vocational skills so that they become economically empowered. Encouragement has been given to many girls to consider making a career in one of the fields of science.

And members have worked extremely hard to develop the role of relationship education following our resolution at Conference.

Ensuring that communities are aware of human trafficking and modern day slavery has been high on the list for many clubs and members this year.

I may not have seen a Programme Focus Report Form for everything you have done but I have seen the evidence on the ground that you have educated, empowered and enabled thousands and thousands of women and girls.

And alongside me every inch of the way has been a wonderful Soroptimister

I thank you all for enabling me to take up this position, to shout about Soroptimism wherever I have been. To proudly represent you to the United Nations, and to your Governments, to know that many other organisations, national and international recognise and respect the work that you do

But most of all I thank you on behalf of every woman and girl who you have helped, supported and inspired. I have only met a small sample of those thousands but they want you to know that you have changed their lives, and even in some cases, saved their lives.

You are truly turning our Soroptimist Vision in to Action around the world. I am proud and delighted to be handing over the leadership of such a vibrant and dynamic organisation to Margaret Oldroyd and her team.

Congratulations to everyone of you.