

HeForShe

Emma Watson

1 Today we are launching a campaign called HeForShe, and I am reaching out to you because we need your help. We want to end gender inequality — and to do this we need everyone involved. We want to encourage as many men and boys as possible to be advocates for change. And we don't just want to talk about it. We want to make sure that it's tangible.

2 I was appointed as Goodwill Ambassador for UN Women 6 months ago and the more I have spoken about feminism, the more I have realized that fighting for women's rights has too often become synonymous with man-hating. If there is one thing I know for certain, it is that this has to stop. For the record, feminism by definition is the belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities.

3 I started questioning gender-based assumptions a long time ago. When I was 8, I was confused about being called "bossy," because I wanted to be a play director. At 14, I started being sexualized by media. At 15, my girlfriends started dropping out of their sports teams because they didn't want to appear "muscly". When I was 18, my male friends were unable to express their feelings.

4 I decided that I was a feminist and this seemed uncomplicated to me. But my recent research has shown me that feminism has become an unpopular word. Women are choosing not to identify as feminists. Some feminists are described as too strong, too aggressive, isolating, anti-men and unattractive. Why has the word become such an uncomfortable one?

5 I think it is right that I'm paid equally as my male counterparts. I think it is right that I should be able to make decisions about my own body. I think it is right that women be involved on my behalf in the policies and decisions that will affect my life. I think it is right that socially I'm afforded the same respect as men. But sadly, I can say that there is no one country in the world where all women can expect to receive these rights. No country in the world can yet say that they have achieved gender equality.

6 These rights I consider to be human rights but I am one of the lucky ones. My life is a sheer privilege because my parents didn't love me less because I was born a daughter. My school didn't limit me because I was a girl. My mentors didn't assume I would go less far because I might give birth to a child one day. These influencers were the gender equality ambassadors that made me who I am today. They may not know it, but they are the inadvertent feminists who are changing the world today. We need more of those.

7 In 1997, Hillary Clinton made a famous speech in Beijing about women's rights. Sadly, many of the things that she wanted to change are still true today. But what stood out for me the most was that less than 30 percent of the audience were male. How can we affect change in the world when only half of it is invited or feel welcome to participate in the conversation?

8 Men, I would like to take this opportunity to extend your formal invitation. Gender equality is

your issue too. Because to date, I've seen my father's role as a parent being valued less by society despite my needing his presence as a child as much as my mother's. I've seen men made fragile and insecure by a distorted sense of what constitutes male success. Men don't have the benefits of equality either.

9 We don't often talk about men being imprisoned by gender stereotypes, but I can see that they are and that when they are free, things will change for women as a natural consequence. If men don't have to be aggressive in order to be accepted, women won't feel compelled to be submissive. If men don't have to control, women won't have to be controlled.

10 Both men and women should feel free to be sensitive. Both men and women should feel free to be strong. It is time that we all perceived gender on a spectrum instead of two sets of opposing ideals.

11 If we stop defining each other by what we are not and start defining ourselves by who we are — we can all be freer and this is what HeForShe is about. It's about freedom.

12 I want men to take up this mantle, so their daughters, sisters and mothers can be free from prejudice and their sons have permission to be vulnerable and human too — reclaim those parts of themselves they abandoned and in doing so be a more true and complete version of themselves.

13 You might be thinking who this Harry Potter girl is. And what is she doing up on stage at the UN? It's a good question and trust me, I have been asking myself the same thing. I don't know if I am qualified to be here. All I know is that I care about this problem. And I want to make it better.

14 In my moments of doubt, I've told myself firmly: if not me, who? If not now, when? If you have similar doubts when opportunities are presented to you, I hope those words will be helpful. We are struggling for a uniting world but the good news is that we have a uniting movement. It is called HeForShe. I am inviting you to ask yourself: "If not me, who? If not now, when?"

(This text was adapted from a speech delivered by Global Goodwill Ambassador of UN Women Emma Watson in 2014.)