

Dear Presidents, Dear Zontian friends,

This letter is your invitation for our District 30 Conference in Zermatt, a world-renowned tourist resort in the Swiss Alps, from 24<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> September.

*“Across the borders. Be inspired”.*

The theme of the conference concerns crossing national borders, de-compartmentalising minds, encouraging the exchange of ideas and points of view, sharing experiences and cultivating bonds of friendship between Zontians from the 8 countries in District 30: Germany, Bulgaria, France, Italy, Northern Macedonia, Monaco, Romania and Switzerland. This is what such a Conference makes possible, especially since the opportunities to meet for the clubs of the different Areas are not very frequent... Also, to make sure that the language is not a barrier to communication, translations will be available in French, German, Italian and Bulgarian.

A District Conference is a mixture of administrative requirements - taking various decisions, notably concerning District bylaws, presentation of accounts and action plans for the future. But, it is also the pleasure of enjoying friendly meetings, lively discussions and debates on various ways of promoting women's causes.

As the main theme of our biennium is “ZONTA says YES to education and ZONTA says NO to violence against women”, we have made these two themes – Zonta's main objectives - the common thread of the discussions and activities in Zermatt. Contest 21 will give us the opportunity to learn from the best services that our clubs have installed. In addition, the practical training provided during 3 workshops will offer all Zontians communication tools likely to make each one a convincing and effective Zonta ambassador. We will also discover the journey of the winners of the Zonta awards and scholarships, which we hope will inspire the younger generations. Finally, the gala evening will be an opportunity to celebrate the clubs that are celebrating a jubilee during this biennium.

The resort of Zermatt is known for its mountaineers, including the British climber Edward Whymper, who made the first ascent of the Matterhorn, on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1865. But six years later, on August 22, 1871, it was a woman, the British Lucy Walker, who was the first to climb this icy peak culminating at 4478 m. It is important to note that at the time, the route was not equipped with fixed ropes, as is the case today, which greatly facilitates the ascent. This year, the village of Zermatt is celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this achievement. The Matterhorn Museum is devoting an exhibition to the role of women in mountaineering. And on the occasion of our Conference, a group of Zontian climbers will raise the Zonta flag on the Breithorn, a 4,000m mountain. And we have planned to mark out a "women's path" in the main street which will celebrate Swiss women pioneers in their field of activity. I would like to mention the positive welcome we received from the municipality of Zermatt and the advantageous accommodation conditions agreed by the hotels.

Another pioneering woman will be the guest of honour at the round table discussion at the Alex Hotel, the venue of our conference: the Afghan activist Zarifa Ghafari, who was awarded the International Women of Courage Award by the US State Department in March 2020. Mayor of Maiden Shahr, a city in the Taliban-held province of Mardak, she has succeeded through her determination to assert herself in her political role, taking measures for the education of girls and fighting for the promotion of women's rights, in accordance with the motto she has given herself: to provide them with the means to act on their economic and social conditions, to make themselves autonomous, which is what the English term empowerment means. Two young women involved in Swiss politics and a journalist from Swiss Television will have an open talk with Zarifa Ghafari following her conference.

The programme of this conference is planned for a weekend, but depending on your availability, you can extend your stay. Thursday 22nd will be an informal day, dedicated to friendly meetings, visits to the village and excursions in the region for those who wish, before the meeting of the members of the District board, the third of this biennium.

It is a good omen for Zonta that this Conference coincides with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the achievement of a woman, the pioneer Lucy Walker, in whose honour the British magazine Punch published a poem with Zonta accents, the last lines of which read:

*No glacier turns her back, no precipice thwarts her, No peak is too high for her, however sublime!*

*Thrice, give thrice a cheer in honor of the intrepid Miss Walker.*

*Say, boys, look at how well she can climb!*

In the name of the organizing committee, I express the wish that this gathering takes place under the best possible auspices and while looking forward to having the pleasure of seeing you in Zermatt, I add my warmest messages to this invitation.

Yours Fabienne



**Fabienne Moulin**

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