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— ***CELEBRATING WOMEN Exhibit*** —
***Photographer Paola Gianturco Represents U.S. for
International Women's Day Program
UNESCO Headquarters
March 10-25, 2009***

PARIS, FRANCE – Paola Gianturco's *Celebrating Women* exhibit—photographs of festivals that honor women in six countries—will open in a private reception on March 9, 2009 at UNESCO international headquarters, 7 place de Fontenoy, Paris, France.

The exhibit was presented in 2008 at the Field Museum in Chicago, Illinois, where it was on display for seven months and was seen by 195,000 visitors.

Based on Ms. Gianturco's book *Celebrating Women* (powerhouse Books, 2004), which featured seventeen festivals in fifteen countries, these traditions honor women for reasons as diverse as kind-heartedness; ferocity; courageousness in the face of social injustice; or simply for being young and fancy-free. A thumbnail sketch of festivals featured in the exhibit follows.

India celebrates the fierce warrior goddess *Kali Puja* who fights evil, while twenty-five thousand virgins in **Swaziland** are honored and give honor to the Queen Mother with the *Umhlanga* Reed Dance. In **Sweden**, for *Sankta Lucia*, little girls wear candles on their heads for events celebrating women as kind. Young girls in **Poland** celebrate women as magical, during *Noc Świętojańska*, involving garlands of wildflowers and herbs floating down the river. The festival of *Boa Morte* in **Brazil** celebrates women as political. Descendants of slave women who helped bring about abolition, convene first for Catholic, then Candomblé, ceremonies. In **Morocco** *Mousseem of Imilchil* celebrates women as initiators. Once a year, Berber widows and divorcees identify and invite men to marry them.

Celebrating Women will be exhibited at the UNESCO House in Rooms Miró 1 and 2 as part of the Organization's International Women's Day (IWD) program, a month-long celebration organized annually by the Division for Gender Equality in the Bureau of Strategic Planning.

The IWD program will also feature selected exhibits created by women artists in China, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, the Czech Republic and Japan.

The exhibits will be open to the public weekdays from March 10-25, 9:30AM to 5:00PM. Admission is free; a photo ID is required to enter the UNESCO building.

The current exhibit is excerpted from the *Celebrating Women* exhibit originally mounted in 2004 by the International Museum of Women, San Francisco, California. That exhibit, which was opened by Mary Robinson, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, was the first exhibit ever curated by the museum.

For more information, visit http://www.celebratingwomen.com/cw_pagesv2/exhibit.html and <http://www.unesco.org/en/iwd09>

PAOLA GIANTURCO

Paola Gianturco's involvement with women internationally is long standing; as a photojournalist, she has documented women's lives in 40 countries and her photographs have been exhibited broadly. For UNESCO International Women's Day 2008, Gianturco participated in the Round Table program, "Gender Equality – Make it Your Business". As an author, *Women Who Light the Dark* (2007) was her fourth book to be published by powerHouse Books. *Viva Colores! A Salute to the Indomitable People of Guatemala* (2006; coauthor David Hill) followed *Celebrating Women* (2004) and *In Her Hands: Craftswomen Changing the World* (paperback, 2004; hardcover, 2000; coauthor Toby Tuttle). All of Gianturco's books are philanthropic projects. For *Women Who Light the Dark*, Gianturco donates 100% of her author royalties to the Global Fund for Women, which advocates for and defends women's human rights by making grants to support women's groups around the world. Gianturco was Chairman of the Board of The Crafts Center in Washington DC, which works with low income artisans in 79 countries, and was a board member of the Association for Women's Rights in Development. She co-developed and taught Summer Executive Institutes on Women and Leadership for Stanford University's Institute for Research on Women and Gender, and Mills College. She sits on the Board of International Nature and Cultural Adventures. Before becoming a full-time photographer, Gianturco worked for 34 years in marketing and communications.