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The AWCDH was established in 2003, and has a mission to help create and support women's equality both on an individual and on a social level. It also aims to help strengthen the role of non-profit organizations in our democracy. "We organized our first major conference with 500 participants in the Houses of Parliament in 2006," Ms. Ferenczi recalled.

"Entitled Women in Political Decision Making, it was the first occasion for which we requested Her Excellency to give a speech.... We have not forgotten her useful advice: 'Let's not be afraid to dream big and let's never give up on our dreams!'" April H. Foley was also keynote speaker at the university roadshows jointly organized by AWCDH and Procter&Gamble at the universities of Debrecen, Pécs, Szeged, and Corvinus University , Budapest. In 2007, Her Excellency was invited as an Honorary Hungarian Woman to the World Conference of Hungarian Women, where she was participated in the panel discussion "Reconciling family and work – the eternal women's challenge".

Her Excellency Ambassador April H. Foley was the first U.S. Ambassador to Hungary who gave special priority to the promotion of equal opportunities for women. For her outstanding contribution, the Association for Women's Career Development in Hungary has bestowed on Her Excellency the "Award for Women's Equality in 2007" and has invited her to sit on its Honorary Advisory Board.

Ambassador of Israel to Hungary Aliza Bin-Noun was also invited to sit on the Honorary Advisory Board at the reception. Andrea Ferenczi concluded with the following words of farewell: "We who love and respect you will miss you but will not forget you, and not only members of our organization but women from all over Hungary who have had the chance to hear you and to learn from you. We would therefore like to ask Your Excellency to represent the interest of our country and Hungarian women wherever you go in America and the world."

Dr. Zita Gurmai, Member of the European Parliament, Vice-Chairwoman of the Committee of Women's Rights and Gender Equality, President of the Honorary Advisory Board of AWCDH, called Ambassador Foley a lifelong ally, since, as she put it, "we are on the same side, on the side of women." Zita Gurmai expressed her gratitude to the outgoing ambassador for "having brought us America from a woman's perspective, as well as for sharing with us best practices from America pertaining to women's equality. We must believe in what we are doing, and we must dream a better future; this is what America has taught us," said the MEP.

"It is wonderful to see so many able and successful women here in this room," said Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Kinga Göncz to the guests by way of a greeting. In her speech, she mentioned that several memorable diplomatic achievements in American-Hungarian relations were realized during Her Excellency April H. Foley's ambassadorship. One of these remarkable occasions was the 50th anniversary of the Revolution of 1956 and the events commemorating it, some of which were attended by President Bush himself.

It was also during Her Excellency's ambassadorship that the visa requirement for Hungarians intending to travel to the US were lifted, thereby wiping out what Kinga Göncz called "the last

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remaining bit of the Iron Curtain". The Minister of Foreign Affairs also pointed out that Her Excellency can serve as a role model for all of us, since she is a living proof that the reconciliation of family and business duties and responsibilities is possible. "We wish Her Excellency immense success for the future. I am absolutely certain that we are going to meet again," Kinga Göncz said as a final remark.

After concert pianist Szilvia Kárászy performed her breathtaking piano piece composed especially for this occasion in honor of the departing ambassador, Her Excellency Ambassador April H. Foley greeted the guests in Hungarian:

"Köszönöm szépen! Nagyszerű, nagyon szép!" ("Thank you very much! This is all wonderful!") Her Excellency said she was deeply touched and grateful for all the kindness shown her at the reception, and said special thanks to Andrea Ferenczi for their fruitful joint projects, whose success was due to their shared values and goals.

Nonetheless, besides expressing pride over the great achievements that have been realized so far, Her Excellency also drew attention to the long road ahead: "We should not forget that only a minor percentage of women can reach senior positions," she said, adding, "I claimed already in 2006 that women should not be denied the opportunity to advance to the highest levels in their chosen professions if that's what they want and they have the talent."

April H. Foley cited the example of several companies who also present in Hungary whose leaders are trying to increase the number of women in senior positions, such as GE, Pfizer, Procter&Gamble, IBM, Morgan Stanley, and Alcoa. She went on to claim that increasing the number of women in Parliament and in top leadership positions at universities, local municipalities, and firms, continues to be a top priority. She emphasized the importance of the need to put the principle of "equal pay for equal work" into practice both in Hungary and in the United States.

April H. Foley said it is very encouraging to see that the very first bill President Obama signed was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Restoration Act, whose purpose is to close the pay gap between women and men. As a concluding thought, Her Excellency reminded us of our personal responsibility to set an example in the realization of equality between the sexes in our own positions.

The reception was closed with a gift presentation ceremony. Her Excellency April H. Foley was delighted to receive special gifts from AWCDH, literary translator Judit Szöllősy (Sollosy), fashion designer János Héjja, pianist Szilvia Kárászy, the Premium-Hungaricum Association, the Deputy Head of MTA Dr. Valéria Csépe, and the CEO of the Hungarian Post Co. Ltd. Dr. Ildikó Szűts."

Source: womenscareer.org

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