Overview

(June 20, 2017, Washington, DC) — Steptoe partner and former Deputy US Trade Representative Ambassador Susan Esserman has received the 2017 Chambers Women in Law Award for "Outstanding Contribution to Advancing Gender Diversity (Private Practice)." Ms. Esserman was presented with the award during a ceremony held at the Yale Club of New York City on June 15.

According to Chambers, the "Outstanding Contribution to Advancing Gender Diversity" award is "reserved for an individual who has demonstrated significant dedication to gender diversity in the legal profession, and whose endeavors have contributed to the advancement of women in law."

In accepting the award, Ms. Esserman commented: "Effectiveness in advancing opportunities for women requires individual activism, institutional commitment, and accountability, and the three are linked. Each one of us has the power and the responsibility to make a difference, whether serving as a mentor or sponsor, promoting women for partnership, or advancing women for leadership positions both inside and outside our firms and companies."

At Steptoe, not only has Ms. Esserman excelled in her international trade practice, she is widely regarded as a firm leader and strong supporter and mentor for women lawyers. Ms. Esserman co-founded, along with Steptoe partner Toni Ianniello, Steptoe's Women's Forum, which serves more than 160 women lawyers in the firm's nine domestic and international offices. She developed the forum to promote professional, business, and personal development of women lawyers at all levels of the firm.

Ms. Esserman is also deeply involved in representing women who are victims of human trafficking. She is a leader of Steptoe's pro bono work on behalf of sex and labor trafficking survivors. Over the years, she has represented numerous human trafficking victims and has drawn in many women associates to work with her in this compelling area. She also provides guidance and support to others in the firm working in the area.

Ms. Esserman's work and passion in this realm culminated in her conceiving, building, and now leading the University of Maryland Support, Advocacy, Freedom and Empowerment (SAFE) Center for Human Trafficking Survivors. The SAFE Center was launched in May 2016 with a formal ceremony attended by the presidents of the University of Maryland, Baltimore, and the University of Maryland, College Park, members of Congress, and state and local officials. As founder and director, Ms. Esserman's vision is to provide comprehensive services to victims of human trafficking to enable them to overcome the trauma of the trafficking they have endured.

In the year since it opened, the SAFE Center has already played an important role in the community and has served 40 human trafficking survivors. The center provides bilingual case management, mental health, medical and legal services to its clients onsite and through its university partners.

This year, Chambers is celebrating the sixth iteration of the Women in Law Awards, bringing an opportunity to champion the achievements of legal practitioners from both in-house and private practice as well as firms and companies which have brought about dramatic improvements in gender equality, women's advancement and inclusion in the legal profession. With more than five years of extensive research into diversity in the United States, these awards represent both the culmination of Chambers research and an opportunity to promote the importance of gender diversity and equal
opportunities for women across the legal spectrum.

For more information on the Chambers Women in Law Awards: USA, please click here.

To read Ms. Esserman’s full speech, please click here.

About Steptoe

Steptoe & Johnson LLP is an international law firm widely recognized for vigorous advocacy in complex litigation and arbitration, successful representation of clients before governmental agencies, and creative and practical advice in guiding business transactions. The firm has more than 500 lawyers and other professionals in offices in Beijing, Brussels, Chicago, London, Los Angeles, New York, Palo Alto, Phoenix and Washington. For more information, visit www.steptoe.com.

Susan Esserman receives Chambers Women in Law Award June 15 in New York City.