

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Prada Group and UNFPA Expand their First-of-Its-Kind Fashion Training Program to Mexico**

*The Partnership – “Fashion Expressions: The Stories She Wears” – Seeks to Advance & Mentor Aspiring Fashion Professionals & Promote Self-agency on Sexual & Reproductive Health expands its scope to women in Querétaro, Mexico*

**Milan, New York and Querétaro, 4 March, 2024** – Ahead of the International Women’s Day, Prada Group and UNFPA, the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency, in a significant step towards fostering positive social change through fashion, announce the expansion of their First-In-Kind fashion training program “*Fashion Expressions: The Stories She Wears*” to Mexico. The project, which leverages fashion as a catalyst to promote women’s empowerment and sexual reproductive health, involves 30 women artisans in Querétaro state, from indigenous and surrounding communities with experience in weaving and embroidery, to strengthen their technical, artistic, and financial skills. Originally launched in 2021, the same initiative successfully equipped 43 participants in Ghana and Kenya with knowledge and practical skills relevant for the fashion industry and facilitated industrial attachments and employment opportunities for the trainees with local fashion houses.

The expansion of the project into Mexico was initiated in September 2023 with a select group of mothers, between ages 18-50, supporting their families. They are skilled embroiderers and weavers who are seeking opportunities to strengthen their production techniques and marketing skills. Prior to joining the program, the artisans selected were working independently, operating their businesses under family models, in small workshops from their homes, usually with their children. They earn an income by selling their crafts at local markets in Querétaro.

Through a 6-month series of training sessions and workshops, this project will provide women with technical skills and resources that will not only equip them with knowledge but also empower them to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health, as well as help showcase their unique cultural heritage. The training will be followed by an opportunity for industrial attachments under the leadership and guidance of experienced fashion professionals.

In addition to utilizing the technical skills of fashion, the program, in collaboration with local implementing partner Nest, a nonprofit organization working to advance gender equity and economic inclusion of artisans, will equip participants with business development skills and financial literacy through budgeting, sales, and merchandising, to further support their entrepreneurial endeavors and foster economic independence. Upon completion, the participants will have the opportunity to tap into Nest’s library of business development resources specifically designed to assist them with their entrepreneurial endeavors and establishing handicraft businesses within their communities.

**Mariarosa Cutillo, Chief of Strategic Partnerships, UNFPA**, said: *“The beauty of the UNFPA partnership with the Prada Group is that it places creativity at the center of building inclusive communities for women and girls. We have seen the impact of this model in Africa, using fashion to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality, and women’s economic empowerment, and are excited to see the results it can have for the women artisans from Querétaro, Mexico.”*

**Lorenzo Bertelli, Prada Group Head of Corporate Social Responsibility**, said: *“Through this partnership with UNFPA, we have witnessed how fashion combined with education, can become a powerful instrument of change and empowerment, complemented by the participants’ natural and effortless skills. Our goal is to empower and instill hope for a brighter future to all involved as we continue our mission of building a more inclusive society.”*

**Malika Savell Cruz, Chief Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer, Prada Group, The Americas**, said: *“We are thrilled to further fortify our partnership with UNFPA as we expand the ‘Fashion Expressions: The Stories She Wears’ program into Mexico. This evolution underscores our commitment to continue championing diversity, equity, and inclusion within the fashion industry. Initiatives like these empower the next generation of creatives while promoting cultural dialogue, understanding, and nurturing a more inclusive global community.”*

**Rebecca van Bergen, Executive Director at Nest** said: *“Nest’s artisan business development programming is a unique complement to the Prada Group and UNFPA’s health-focused curriculum, which enables them to better support women holistically as they seek brighter futures for themselves, their families, and their communities.”*

## **ABOUT**

### **UNFPA**

UNFPA is the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency. UNFPA's mission is to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled. UNFPA calls for the realization of reproductive rights for all and supports access to a wide range of sexual and reproductive health services.

### **Prada Group**

The Prada Group is socially engaged to contribute to the sustainable development of the communities and stimulate the cultural debate in all its forms of expression. The Group partners with recognized players and international entities to develop educational and training programs, value talent, support scientific research, foster women's empowerment, and promote local culture and artistic heritage. The Prada Group operates in the luxury sector through the Prada, Miu Miu, Church's, Car Shoe, Marchesi 1824 and Luna Rossa brands.

### **Nest**

Nest ([www.buildanest.org](http://www.buildanest.org)) is a nonprofit supporting the responsible growth and creative engagement of the artisan and maker economy to build a world of greater gender equity and economic inclusion. Since 2006, Nest has been supporting creative communities with educational resources and market access opportunities as means to increase craft-based income and preserve cultural craft traditions.

### **For further information:**

Prada Group Press Office  
[corporatepress@prada.com](mailto:corporatepress@prada.com)

UNFPA Press Office in New York  
Eddie Wright  
[ewright@unfpa.org](mailto:ewright@unfpa.org)