

Media Update

7 March 2018

United Nations International Women's Day 8 March 2018

“Women's Day 2018: Progress for women is progress for all”

By António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations

We are at a pivotal moment for women's rights. The historical and structural inequalities that have allowed oppression and discrimination to flourish are being exposed like never before. From Latin America to Europe to Asia, on social media, on film sets, on the factory floor and in the streets, women are calling for lasting change and zero tolerance for sexual assault, harassment, and discrimination of all kinds.

Achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls is the unfinished business of our time, and the greatest human rights challenge in our world. The activism and advocacy of generations of women has borne fruit. There are more girls in school than ever before; more women are doing paid work and in senior roles in the private sector, academia, politics and in international organizations, including the United Nations. Gender equality is enshrined in countless laws, and harmful practices like female genital mutilation and child marriage have been outlawed in many countries. But serious obstacles remain if we are to address the historic power imbalances that underpin discrimination and exploitation.

More than a billion women around the world lack legal protection against domestic sexual violence. The global gender pay gap is 23 per cent, rising to 40 per cent in rural areas, and the unpaid work done by many women goes unrecognized. Women's representation in national parliaments stands, on average, at less than one quarter, and in boardrooms it is even lower.



Without concerted action, millions more girls will be subjected to genital mutilation over the next decade.

Where laws exist, they are often ignored, and women who pursue legal redress are doubted, denigrated and dismissed. We now know that sexual harassment and abuse have been thriving in workplaces, public spaces and private homes, in countries that pride themselves on their record of gender equality.

The United Nations should set an example for the world.

I recognize that this has not always been the case. Since the start of my tenure last year, I have set change in motion at UN headquarters, in our peacekeeping missions and in all our offices worldwide.

We have now reached gender parity for the first time in my senior management team, and I am determined to achieve this throughout the organization. I am totally committed to zero tolerance of sexual harassment and have set out plans to improve reporting and accountability. We are working closely with countries around the world to prevent and address sexual exploitation and abuse by staff in peacekeeping missions, and to support victims.

We at the United Nations stand with women around the world as they fight to overcome the injustices they face – whether they are rural women dealing with wage discrimination, urban women organizing for change, women refugees at risk of exploitation and abuse, or women who experience intersecting forms of discrimination: widows, indigenous women, women with disabilities and women who do not conform to gender norms.

Women's empowerment is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals means progress for all women, everywhere. The Spotlight initiative launched jointly with the European Union will focus resources on eliminating violence against women and girls, a prerequisite for equality and empowerment.

Let me be clear: this is not a favour to women. Gender equality is a human rights issue, but it is also in all our interests: men and boys, women and girls. Gender inequality and discrimination against women harms us all. There is ample evidence that investing in women is the most effective way to lift communities, companies, and even countries. Women's participation

makes peace agreements stronger, societies more resilient and economies more vigorous. Where women face discrimination, we often find practices and beliefs that are detrimental to all. Paternity leave, laws against domestic violence and equal pay legislation benefit everyone.

At this crucial moment for women's rights, it is time for men to stand with women, listen to them and learn from them. Transparency and accountability are essential if women are to reach their full potential and lift all of us, in our communities, societies and economies.

I am proud to be part of this movement, and I hope it continues to resonate within the United Nations and around the world.

Please download video message of the UN's Secretary-General António Guterres on International Women's day 2018 here:

<https://unmultimedia.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=f7fc7b29afa00e9ca0f4c1d90&id=82677a6b10&e=f38649d311>

Time is Now: Rural and Urban Activists Transforming Women's Lives

Statement by Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, UN Women for International Women's Day

This year's theme captures the vibrant life of the women activists whose passion and commitment have won women's rights over the generations, and successfully brought change. We celebrate an unprecedented global movement for women's rights, equality, safety and justice, recognizing the tireless work of activists who have been central to this global push for gender equality.

What we see today is a remarkable gathering of strength among women all over the world, demonstrating the power of speaking with one voice, as they call for opportunity and accountability, drawing momentum from grassroots networks and coalitions that stretch right up to government leadership. These movements grow from the work of multigenerational activists—from the late



feminist human rights leader Asma Jahangir of Pakistan, to the powerful new generation represented by young women like Jaha Dukureh of The Gambia, UN Women's Regional Goodwill Ambassador for Africa on ending FGM and child marriage.

Healthy societies have a wide mix of voices and influences that provide the checks and balances, the differing threads of experience and perspectives, and the debate that shapes good decision-making. Where voices are missing, there is an important gap in the fabric of society. When those quietened voices count in the millions, we know there is something wrong with our world. Similarly, as we see and hear those voices rise in strength and solidarity, we feel the power of something right.

We salute those who have bravely spoken out to gain access to justice, such as those from the #MeToo movement, who in recent months have found their voice in social media in more than 85 countries to expose those who have preyed on the less powerful and shown how when women support one another, they help to overcome stigma and ensure that their stories are believed.

We commend the women who spoke out in the International Criminal Court where their testimonies have held to account those who used rape as a weapon of war. We celebrate activists who campaigned for equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people, and we recognize those who advocated for legal reform in countries such as Tunisia, to end a provision that allowed rapists to escape persecution if they married their victims. We acknowledge those who have taken to the streets in India to decry the murder and rape of young children, turning protests into broader-based movements that engage entire communities. We honour the indigenous leaders who have stood up for their custodial rights to land and traditional practices, and the human rights defenders who have even lost their lives for their cause.

The feminist movement must continue to increase the diversity and the number of people working on gender equality, bringing in individuals and groups—such as men and boys, young people and faith-based organizations—to support and shape the agenda, so young men and boys learn to value and respect women and girls and so men can change the way they behave. Today's activism needs to alter the way we listen to women and the way we look at them, recognizing the power of stereotypes to influence

how we value people. A movement of women that can address these issues is critical, but we also need a movement of male feminists.

This has to be a tipping point; an end to impunity and the silent suffering of women in rural and urban areas, including women domestic workers. Today's activists must empower those most likely to be left behind, the majority of whom are women, as our latest report, Turning Promises into Action reveals. Across all regions, women are more likely to live in extreme poverty than men. This gender gap is as high as 22 per cent for the 25 - 34 age group—women's peak reproductive years, starkly highlighting the dilemma so many face of reconciling income with care—for which policy change and action is so needed.

UN Women has a special relationship with the women's movement; we arose from that activism. Civil society has had a historically crucial role in leading global action on gender equality by promoting reform, highlighting the complexities of the challenges facing women, influencing policies, participating in monitoring, and upholding accountability. We must deliberately create stronger support for women's political activism and a broader space for women's civil society voices so that our efforts combine to target those who truly need change most. The culture of gender-based poverty, abuse and exploitation has to end with a new generation of equality that lasts.

Statement on International Women's Day

By Yury Fedotov, the Executive Director, UN Office on Drugs and Crime,

8 March 2018

VIENNA, 8 March 2018 (UN Information Service) — International Women's Day is a day to celebrate the towering achievements and immense strengths of women and girls everywhere. But it is also a day to reflect on continuing challenges and to agree on joint action to further advance gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Significant strides have been made to bridge inequalities and to create inclusive societies. Nevertheless, women around the world are plagued by



dispiriting pay gaps in the workplace and unequal access to education. They face sexual harassment and violence rooted in endemic prejudices that disproportionately affect those living in the countryside.

The global call for the protection of women's rights has also generated a powerful surge for collective action.

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is committed to doing our part through our global programmes on crime prevention and criminal justice, to prevent and stop human trafficking, and across the other areas of our mandate.

We are determined, through this work, to support and assist the millions of women and girls who are crime's victims and to help them become resilient survivors.

UNODC has also launched a new gender strategy, in line with the efforts of the wider United Nations, that will help to ensure that our workplaces deliver on equality and fairness, and that we advance measures to achieve gender parity.

By working together, UNODC is building a welcoming workplace where women can realize their full potential, and where all of us are treated with dignity and unfailing respect.

On International Women's Day, and founded on Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, I affirm UNODC's continued pledge to every woman and girl: we will work tirelessly to end impunity and violence, improve protection and fight for justice.

For more information resource on IWD-2018 please visit: <http://bit.ly/19tnmnz>
