INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD
11 October 2019

Today, more than 1 billion girls younger than 18 are poised to take on the future. Every day, they are challenging stereotypes and breaking barriers. Girls are organizing and leading movements to tackle issues such as child marriage, education inequality, violence and the climate crisis. As the theme of this year’s observance underscores, they are proving to be unscripted and unstoppable.

On this International Day, we celebrate achievements by, with and for girls since the adoption of the landmark Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action – a comprehensive policy agenda for the empowerment of women and girls. Across nearly 25 years, we have seen more girls attending and completing school, fewer getting married or becoming mothers while still children themselves, and more gaining the skills they need to excel in the workplace.

It is no longer acceptable for girls to have to scale-back their dreams or be made to believe they were unreachable in the first place. Yet many are still held back by harmful gender norms that influence everything they do: if, when and whom they marry, whether they attend and complete school, access health services or earn a living, and so much else. Two hundred million girls and women are subjected to female genital mutilation. Three of four victims of human trafficking are women and girls. Conflicts trap millions in violence, uncertainty and despair.

To ensure that all girls can reach their potential, we need concerted efforts and investments in their health, safety and 21st-century skills. Every year of secondary schooling a girl receives boosts her earning power by as much as 25 per cent. If all girls and boys complete secondary education, 420 million people could be lifted out of poverty. The benefits unfold across generations.

We need to uphold the equal rights, voices and influence of girls in our families, communities and nations. Girls can be powerful agents of change, and nothing should keep them from participating fully in all areas of life.