

Joint Statement on International Women's Day: Equality in Law for Women and Girls in a Digital Age

On International Women's Day, we are reminded of the work still to be done to advance the gender equality agenda in a digital age. Awareness of women's rights among women and girls and men and boys is keenly dependent on access to innovative technology, including simple tools such as mobile phones. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated quite clearly that closing the gender digital gap is an essential precondition to women's access to justice and other legal services.

Legal reform is especially urgent: more than 2.5 billion women and girls live in a discriminatory environment or lack essential protections. *Equality in Law for Women and Girls by 2030: A Multi-stakeholder Strategy for Accelerated Action* was launched by a multistakeholder group led by UN Women in 2019 to fast track the repeal of such inequalities, which deny women and girls equal rights, betray their trust in society and signal that gender discrimination is acceptable. Approaching the four-year mark is an opportunity to recommit to ensuring women's fundamental human rights and close these remaining gender gaps once and for all.

Discriminatory laws not only affect women's and girls' rights but also hinder development across all sectors, including rapidly advancing innovation and technological change. A holistic approach, addressing comprehensive and specific reforms in the fields of economic empowerment, minimum age of marriage, nationality rights, violence against women, political participation, and family and personal status laws would have ripple effects on the whole of society.

Already Member States are acting on this imperative. Since 2019, Rwanda enacted reforms upholding the rights of widows to remarry following the death of their husbands without restrictions. Pakistan lifted limitations on women's ability to work at night. Brazil established policies to prevent, sanction and end violence against women in politics. Peru approved new legal provisions to protect the rights of domestic workers. Liberia enshrined women's rights to confer nationality on their children and spouses on an equal basis with men. Morocco set mandatory quotas for women on the boards of publicly traded companies. And Ukraine introduced paid paternity leave to ensure the equal distribution of parental responsibilities. Among others, these reforms have begun to reverse generations of injustice and address the legal needs of millions.

Yet there is more work to be done. Ensuring that every woman and girl can live up to her full potential requires transformative changes to laws, policies and constitutions, and a broader strategy for their effective implementation, which should include technology and innovation. It is a collective effort that must involve the engagement of States, regional and inter-regional bodies, civil society organizations, intergovernmental organizations, and UN agencies. Despite unprecedented challenges facing women all over the world, these dedicated stakeholders must remain steadfast in their commitment to pursuing gender-responsive legal reform, using technology and other means in at least 100 countries. The world cannot wait another 286 years to eradicate these disparities.

Today, let us honor the historic progress that gender champions all over the world have made and once again pledge to make equality a reality. The Sustainable Development Goals cannot be achieved without the meaningful and equal participation of women. This starts with equality in law for women and girls everywhere.

Partners of the Global Strategy for Equality in Law for Women and Girls by 2030: A Multi-stakeholder Strategy for Accelerated Action are **UN Women; The African Union; Commonwealth Secretariat; Inter-Parliamentary Union; Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie; Secretaria General Ibero-Americana; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; Equality Now;**

Global Citizen; Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights; Global Campaign for Equality in Family Law; International Association of Women Judges; International Development Law Organization; Muslims for Progressive Values; Women's Learning Partnership; The International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute; Commonwealth Parliamentary Association; and Girls Not Brides.