

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD
New York, 11 October 2015

The newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals rightly include key targets for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. They offer an opportunity for a global commitment to breaking intergenerational transmission of poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination – and realizing our vision of a life of dignity for all.

Our task now is to get to work on meeting the SDG targets and making good on our promises to give girls all the opportunities they deserve as they mature to adulthood by 2030. That means enabling them to avoid child marriage and unwanted pregnancy, protect against HIV transmission, stay safe from female genital mutilation, and acquire the education and skills they need to realize their potential. It also requires ensuring their sexual health and reproductive rights. Girls everywhere should be able to lead lives free from fear and violence. If we achieve this progress for girls, we will see advances across society.

Just after the adoption last month of the global goals for sustainable development, world leaders heard a ringing call from Nobel Peace Laureate Malala Yousafzai, who was flanked in the General Assembly Hall by young people from around the world. “Promise us that you will keep your commitments and invest in our future,” she urged.

Three years ago, on the International Day of the Girl Child, I condemned the attack against Malala and called for more opportunities for girls everywhere. Today, I applaud her courage and that of her peers, who only want the chance to contribute to our world.

Let us resolve to invest in today’s adolescent girls so that tomorrow they can stand strong as citizens, political leaders, entrepreneurs, heads of their households and more. This will secure their rights and our common future.