



Graduate Women
International (GWI)

Press Release

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On International Women's Day, GWI voices concern about the persistence of gender stereotypes and gender disparities in the media

Geneva, Switzerland, 8 March 2018 – Since its emergence at the turn of the twentieth century, International Women's Day has evolved into a global rallying point to build support for the advancement of the rights and status of women and girls in all parts of the world and in all spheres of society. On International Women's Day 2018 and echoing the review theme of the 62nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Graduate Women International (GWI) calls attention to the concerning persistence of gender stereotypes and gender disparities in the media.

In 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) identified the media as one of the “areas of particular urgency that stand out as priorities for action” in advancing gender equality and women's and girls' rights. 20 years later, in September 2015, the global community reiterated its commitment to ensuring gender equality in all fields of society through the cross-sector collaboration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). GWI welcomed the 17 SDGs as an inspired vision and consensus of 193 Member States to follow this new roadmap as an opportunity to redefine their values and raise their contribution towards women, including in the media. **Yet, the need for action in relation to the coverage of women and girls in the media is ever-growing and more urgent now than it was more two decades ago.**

According to the Global Media Monitoring Project, women today are the focus of a mere 10% of news stories, comprise just 20% of spokespeople interviewed, while an unacceptably low 4% of news stories are deemed to challenge gender stereotypes. As shown by the Nordic Centre for Media and Communication Research, the leadership of the 100 largest international media corporations is dominated by men: on average, 80 per cent of directors are men and there are only six female CEOs leading these corporations. **GWI does not accept this as the norm.**

“Gender discrimination deprives media coverage of the richness that women's diverse perspectives can bring and significantly limits media's appeal to half of the population”, says GWI Vice President Education and Advocacy, Hazel Bowen. “The media, as socio-cultural institutions able to shape social norms, should be an example of gender equality, depicting women in diverse jobs and situations and representing women in all areas of coverage. And yet unequal gender power relations are entrenched and validated while gender stereotypes are replicated and reinforced by the world's news media”, she adds.

For too long, gender bias in the media has remained on the margins of policy agendas for gender equality. GWI insists that media scale up their focus on women's and girls' rights and gender equality, as well as to implement gender-sensitive corporate practices. Attitude change, awareness raising, and the transformation of stereotypes are key to achieve full gender equality. Giving equal time and weight to their stories, as well as positive images and portrayals, are an important part of advancing women's status and creating a better and freer world.

Graduate Women International (GWI) is a membership-based international NGO based in Geneva, Switzerland, with presence in over 60 countries. Founded in 1919, GWI is the leading girls' and women's global organisation advocating for women's rights, equality and empowerment through access to quality education and training up to the highest levels. GWI is in special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1947 and is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO and ILO.

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Contributing to this press release is GWI Intern Clémence Mathiaud from Sciences Po Lyon, France