



Graduate Women
International (GWI)

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GWI supports ILO's efforts towards the establishment of legally-binding international standards to eliminate gender-based violence in the world of work

Geneva, Switzerland, 25 November 2018— Observed annually on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women provides a forum to highlight and address the widespread scourge of gender-based violence (GBV). Today also launches the beginning of the 16 Days of Activism Against GBV Campaign, running until Human Rights Day on 10 December. The most widely recognized and longest-running campaign for women's rights in the world. Since 1991, the 16 Days Campaign unites women and girls to raise awareness about GBV and to challenge all global citizens to eliminate all GBV forms and demand protection for women and girls from GBV. This year, the theme of the campaign is "Together we can end GBV in the World of Work".

The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) defines GBV as "violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately." More generally, GBV can be any act of violence that results in physical, sexual, economic or psychological harm or suffering to women and girls, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, in public or in private life. GBV is a global pandemic, a major human rights violation and the reflection of unequal power relations between women and men in society. As reported by UN Women, 35% of women worldwide have experienced violence whether physical and/or sexual and between 40 and 50 per cent of women experience unwanted sexual advances, physical contact or other forms of sexual harassment at work.

"Workplaces are a critical environment in which to address violence", says Geeta Desai, GWI President. "GBV in the world of work is one of the most important and widespread obstacles to women's economic empowerment, autonomy and independence – and to the realisation of gender equality. As an organisation committed to the empowerment of all women and girls, GWI calls for the urgent establishment of much needed internationally agreed laws and regulations tackling the many different forms of gender-based violence in the workplace", she adds.

GWI is encouraged by the standard-setting process on harassment and violence against women and men in the world of work started in 2015 by the international Labour Organisation (ILO). This process led to the creation in June 2018 of a special ILO Committee in charge of discussing a potential new ILO Instrument on Violence and Harassment in the world of work. In June 2019, the ILO committee will meet again to decide on what form the instrument will take. GWI supports this vital process and urges ILO to adopt the strongest possible instrument – a legally binding convention supplemented by a recommendation. GWI further calls for a clear focus on GBV and the elimination of the unequal gender power relations at the root of GBV.

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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