

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Raising awareness is not enough, Graduate Women International voices global outrage against trafficking in persons – an insidious crime against women and girls right to education**

**Geneva, Switzerland, 30 July 2020**— The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted 30 July as World Day against Trafficking in Persons in 2013. The day aims to raise awareness about human trafficking, a crime that exploits women, children, and men for sex, forced labour, domestic servitude, and other heinous crimes. However, raising awareness is not thwarting perpetrators or dismantling human trafficking cartels who prey on vulnerable people in every part of the world. Graduate Women International (GWI) marks today with outrage about trafficking in persons (TIP), an evil, repressive crime against women and girls' and their right to education.

Globally, 72% of the detected victims of trafficking in persons are women and girls. They also represent 94% of the identified victims of TIP for sexual exploitation (United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC)). The figures are only mere reflections of TIP's incommensurable human and economic cost, which disproportionately weighs on women and girls. Distressingly, this year has seen an increase in the global incidence of TIP due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Enforcement measures have driven traffickers further underground, increasing their abuse of modern communication technology to reach young women and girls forced out of the safe havens of school.

Because of the recent school closures, children and young women and girls worldwide are more vulnerable than ever to TIP. Schools are not only necessary for education but are also a source of shelter and safety from traffickers ([UNODC](#)). In the current situation, governments must adapt quickly and with the full political will to ensure that all children, and especially women and girls, remain in the educational system whether virtually, small community classes or safely reopened schools.

"Amid COVID-19 measures, governments must not lose sight of concerted efforts to disrupt operations of traffickers", says GWI President, Terry Oudraad. "The coordination between non-governmental organisations such as GWI, governments, the media, and private sector is critical to exposing traffickers and aiding victims", she continues.

Today, GWI raises the voice of its international network of graduate women to reaffirm Resolution 7 adopted by the GWI General Assembly in 2016, which empowers its National Federations and Associations to demand that governments review and implement national legislation aimed to eradicate trafficking. GWI's strength in numbers comes with the power to power bring TIP out of the shadows and take a stand against traffickers.

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 summer intern, Sophie Husser.*