

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Current global changes are critically impacting young people: Graduate Women International (GWI) stresses the need to include youth in decision-making and is proud of its Young Members Network**

**Geneva, Switzerland, 12 August 2020** — Young people aged 15 to 24 represent more than 1.2 billion people in the world, namely about 1/6 of the world's population (UN World Youth Report 2020). The COVID-19 crisis and the equivalent of 155 million full-time jobs loss in the first four months of 2020 (International Labour Organisation) creates a challenging job market for this section of society. International Youth Day (IYD), was designated in 1999 by the United Nations (UN) to address such challenges of young people and to celebrate the power of youth. Today, GWI aligns with the UN to celebrate "Youth engagement for Global Action" and acknowledges youth's crucial role in building a better future by showcasing its Young Members Network (YMN).

"GWI's international advocacy has broadened, placing our young members at the forefront of our actions", says GWI President, Terry Oudraad. "If we are to hope for a better world after the current crisis, we must ensure that youth participation, and especially women's and girls', is the norm for all future decisions at all levels", she continues.

As a commitment to raising the voices of young women and emboldening them to sit at the decision-making table, GWI's re-formed its YMN during the GWI Centennial celebration in Geneva in July 2019. Young members of GWI gathered to form a proactive group, with a mission to "inspire, empower and mentor women through education". GWI is proud of the YMN determination to participate in the Generation Equality Forums, bringing their action themes progress to the table and contribute as young women to better and more sustainable policies. Their engagement comes with great preparation as they will organise an advocacy boot-camp for 2021. The COVID-19 crisis has shown once again youth's capacity to respond through social impact innovation. Young women, such as the GWI YMN, are mobilising, making their voices heard, lifting those who have been silenced, and driving transformative change.

GWI also takes the opportunity on IYD to reaffirm the necessity of the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, quality education and SDG target 16.7, which stresses the importance of "responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels", and spurs institutions at all levels to consider youth engagement as a way to strengthen their capacities, build better outcomes and reduce democratic deficits. Now is the time to give young people and especially women and girls the opportunity to become autonomous actors of their own fate.

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.*