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**Graduate Women International joins the International Labour Organization call for increased social protection systems to prevent child labour**

**Geneva, Switzerland, 12 June 2022** – Today marks the 20th anniversary of World Day Against Child Labour. Under the theme “Universal Social Protection to End Child Labour” Graduate Women International (GWI), together with the International Labour Organization (ILO), are calling for increased investment in child-sensitive social protection systems to protect children from falling prey to forced child labour and remaining in the labour activities in lieu of school. Child labour robs children of their right to education, but it also impacts those children who prefer to stay in school by decreasing motivation and academic achievement. Short-sighted strategies that strain social protection systems require national review and transformation. GWI and its international network of graduate women changemakers stand ready to collaborate and inspire change.

“Education is key to tackling child labour, especially the education of women and girls”, says GWI President Terry Oudraad. “When women are educated, their children are far less likely to be involved in child labour,” she adds.

Today, 160 million children are still engaged in child labour – some as young as 5. That’s almost one in ten children worldwide. Government social protection systems are essential to eradicate and prevent child labour. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, an astounding 53.1 per cent of the global population had no social protection. Deplorably, coverage for children is even lower, with about three-quarters of children, 1.5 billion, lacking social protection (ILO). Social protection is a human right and a powerful policy tool to prevent families from resorting to child labour.

GWI calls for child-sensitive social protection policies and worldwide government commitment to quality education for women and girls to end child labour and protect children who currently lack social protection. GWI also congratulates incoming ILO Director-General Gilbert F. Houngbo on his appointment and wishes him a successful term that includes attention to eradicating child labour through education and social protection systems.

**About Graduate Women International (GWI)**

Graduate Women International (GWI) is a membership-based international NGO based in Geneva, Switzerland, with a 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 and is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO and ILO.

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