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On International Youth Day, Graduate Women International urges an inclusive, collaborative and equal society for everyone, no matter their age or gender

Geneva, Switzerland, 12 August 2022 – In 1998, the United Nations designated 12 August as International Youth Day in order to draw attention to youth issues worldwide. As of late, and as an unfortunate waste of talent, youth (15-24) are more likely than any other age group to lose their jobs and millions of youth struggle to obtain employment (WHO). Youth experience the most biased treatment because of their age and 55% of youth have felt that someone had shown them a lack of respect or treated them badly as a result of their age (WHO). Graduate Women International (GWI) observes this year's theme, *Intergenerational Solidarity: Creating a World for All Ages*, by bringing attention to the discrimination that youth face in particular young women and advocating for youth to be given equal opportunity to participate in society and decision-making to achieve sustainable development.

Youth workers report not feeling valued, being subject to negative age stereotypes and belittling comments and being generally perceived as incompetent because they are young (WHO). *In addition*, being female increases the likelihood of being a target of ageism directed against younger people (WHO). For instance, one study showed that students had lower expectations about the performance of young female teachers than of young male teachers or teachers of other ages (WHO).

"There is a common misconception that ageism only impacts older people, however, this is not the case", says Terry Oudraad, GWI President. "Youth voices, particularly young women and girls' voices, need to be amplified in order to ensure an inclusive, collaborative and equal society for everyone, no matter their age or gender", she adds.

As the world navigates the third year of considerable global change, it is important to recognise and address the age-related barriers to "build back better" in a way that supports all generations' strengths and knowledge. In particular, young women continue to face gender-based discrimination, marginalization, and violence, including unequal access to education and opportunities for leadership and participation. An extra year of secondary school boosts girls' wages by 15 % to 25% (UN). It is essential to invest in young women and girls in order to achieve sustainable development.

GWI calls on states to act according to their narrative and invest in young women and girls through the implementation of evidence-based strategies to prevent and respond to ageism and to build a movement to change the narrative around age.

About Graduate Women International (GWI)

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 and is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO and ILO.

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