



# Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Education has the power to inspire women and girls and pave the way for a future of enduring peace**

**Geneva, Switzerland, 21 September 2023** - The International Day of Peace is celebrated annually on September 21st. It was established by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in 1981. In 2001, the General Assembly unanimously voted to designate the day as a period of non-violence and cease-fire. The Day is devoted to commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace within and among all nations and peoples. The 2023 theme, which is "Actions for Peace: Our Ambition for the #Global Goals," focuses on how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are essential to preventing conflict and maintaining peace. Graduate Women International (GWI) embodies this theme, as it highlights the importance of the SDGs in achieving global peace.

GWI strongly advocates for achieving peace through the pursuit of SDGs, particularly SDG 4 which calls for inclusive and equitable quality education, and SDG 16, which aims to promote just, peaceful, and inclusive societies. It is central to the GWI mission to ensure universal access to education for all women and girls, while recognising the intrinsic link between education and peace. We firmly believe that education is a vital factor for global harmony. Our vision is a world where peace and education intersect, fostering a brighter and more equitable future for all.

Patrice Wellesley-Cole, GWI President and Institute of Economics and Peace Ambassador, strongly emphasises GWI's commitment to advocate for the right to education as a vector of peace. She says, "GWI has been in the forefront championing peace through international friendship since its inception. One of its co-founders, Virginia Gildersleeve, was one of the drafters of the UN Charter writing the words, 'We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of War'.... Another co-founder, Caroline Spurgeon, said, GWI, then International Federation of University Women, was created so 'we would have done all we could to at least prevent another catastrophe', Wellesley-Cole added.

Nowadays, peace is not achieved for varying reasons. Armed conflicts with high levels of violence are ongoing. The absence of peace has a detrimental effect on a country's progress and economic sustainability. In fact, areas of conflict are more susceptible to sexual violence, hate speech, and genocide. Hence, it is of utmost importance that global communities work together to improve access to education as a lasting solution to this global challenge. GWI is adamant that education is the conduit to safety and freedom from violence for everyone, regardless of their ethnicity, faith, gender, or sexual orientation, and access to it must be a top priority.

GWI acknowledges that its collective responsibility in creating peace is pivotal to achieving the SDGs, particularly through prioritising education for all women and girls. In a world characterised by conflicts and environmental changes, empowering women and girls with education becomes essential for forging lasting peace.

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 has maintained special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1947 and is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO and ILO.

*Contributing to this press release is Summer 2023 intern, Salomé Delsaux*

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