



Graduate Women
International (GWI)

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Geneva, Switzerland, 21 March 2024 – As the world commemorates the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on March 21st, Graduate Women International (GWI) reaffirms its commitment to combating all forms of racial discrimination through the safe access to quality education and lifelong training. Aligned with the 2024 theme, "A Decade of Recognition, Justice, and Development: Implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent," GWI emphasizes the critical importance of recognizing, promoting justice, and fostering development for people of African descent, alongside combating racial discrimination globally.

Stemming from historical significance dating back to 1966, when it was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, this day commemorates tragic events such as the massacre of 69 peaceful demonstrators in South Africa in 1960 followed, in 2002, by the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA), a comprehensive framework for combating racism and related issues. GWI aligns with the DDPA in stressing the importance of promoting diversity and inclusion within educational systems and tailoring its international advocacy to influence policies towards such.

Emphasizing the pivotal role of education and reiterating GWI's more than century-long commitment to leveraging education for social change, GWI President, Patrice Wellesley-Cole says, "For 105 years, GWI has stood by the conviction that education plays a pivotal role in reducing racial discrimination, empowering individuals to challenge biases, promote understanding, and advocate for a more just and equitable society."

GWI plays a pivotal role in supporting the equipping of teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to cultivate inclusive learning environments. Through its global network of graduate women, GWI provides resources, training programs, and advocacy initiatives, that empowers educators to effectively address incidents of racism and discrimination within educational settings. This underscores the critical role of education in creating a culture of tolerance, respect, and equality. GWI resources serve as powerful tools in the fight against racism and discrimination.

Women from minority backgrounds face compounding challenges, including racial and gender biases. Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance manifest differently for women and girls, exposing them to gender-specific forms of violence and exploitation. Migrant and refugee women are particularly vulnerable to discriminatory practices, often forced into informal sectors where their rights are disregarded. Education serves as a tool to recognize and challenge such practices, fostering resilience. The GWI Hegg Hoffet fund supports displaced graduate women, aiming to facilitate their re-entry into professional fields and integration into their asylum countries through language courses.

About GWI: 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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