

ICW-CIF Statement

In Recognition of International Women's Day

March 8, 2019

The theme chosen by the UN for International Women's Day 2019, "Think equal, build smart, innovate for change," is a powerful slogan indeed, but women throughout the world have to ask themselves whether the theme target is likely to turn out to be a reality or just a myth... that is considering the gender inequalities still existing in the world; and considering also the barriers to be removed in order to build services and infrastructures that help to meet the specific needs of women and girls, and foster innovation for change. YES, we have to think equal and to continue fighting for our rights and focus on innovative ways for the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Indeed, there has been a growing recognition in recent decades of the interconnected nature of gender inequalities, women's empowerment, globalization, climate change, environmental degradation, poverty, gender-based violence, communicable diseases and other phenomena. It has thus become clear that current global challenges for the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals require multi-dimensional, interdisciplinary and innovative solutions that address the complex linkages between these issues. Despite this growing recognition for building smart, based on change innovation and technology, gender equality remains a "missing link" throughout many relevant policies and programs. There thus remains a compelling need for women worldwide to assume leading roles to help chart action in the desired directions.

The basis however for women to progress generally towards thinking equal, building smart and innovative maneuvering for change rests on women and girls being given the opportunity of acquiring the educational infrastructure needed. As such ICW calls upon its members throughout the world to strongly foster the educational infrastructure basis so needed in their own countries for women and girls.

Gender equality, it goes without saying, is a fundamental human right, a building block for social justice and an economic necessity, but we have to face the fact that despite progress made, women globally are still far from reaching it. As pointed out

by UN WOMEN, innovative approaches are critical to overcoming structural obstacles and "ensuring that no woman and no girl is left behind".

The International Council of Women (ICW-CIF), an international NGO which has been at the forefront of fighting for women's rights and empowerment for 130 years, appeals to game-changing activists in civil society, governments, and all stakeholders, to join efforts and to do far more together to uphold the human rights and potential of every girl and woman. As stated by Mrs. Irina Bokova, Former Director-General of UNESCO, "The empowerment of girls and women starts on the benches of school with quality education and access to culture and information. Gender equality means literacy. It means access to science. It means genuine possibilities for girls to become everything they wish for and to make their own informed choices. This is essential for human rights, for health, for sustainable development, for the fabric of societies as a whole..."

ICW-CIF firmly believes in the vital role of education for women and girls to develop the skills and capacities necessary to achieve women's empowerment and gender equality and to fully participate in producing innovative ideas to build a sustainable and more peaceful world without the threat of violence against women. As the International Women's Day theme 2019 states, people need to "Think equal, build smart, innovate for change" and seek new ways to advance gender equality and women's empowerment, especially in terms of social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure.

In order therefore to make genuine change, women and girls need to awaken their global responsibility, national commitment, and power potential within local communities, and to remember that the possibility of achieving this change lies within their own capacities as women leaders. It is only by working together and combining our strengths that we will be able to translate global agreements about women's rights into tangible, meaningful results.