



**MESSAGE**

**BY**

**THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
H.E. MR. JAN ELIASSON**

**ON THE OCCASION OF  
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

**UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS  
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International Women's Day is more than a symbolic event. It is an important yearly opportunity to assess the international community's efforts for the advancement of women around the world and to renew our commitment to reach gender equality.

The theme this year – 'Women in decision-making: meeting challenges, creating change' – reminds us that much more needs to be done to fully achieve women's participation in political life and leadership positions.

Women are the pillars not only of the family, but also of society as a whole. It is incumbent upon all of us to respect and recognize their important contributions to political, economic and social progress all over the world.

We will not achieve our collective goals for development, peace and security and human rights if we do not take concrete action to enhance women's participation in decision-making in governments, parliaments, international organizations, academic life and the private sector.

An urgent first step is to make much greater progress on the education of girls. It is not acceptable that over 50 million girls of primary age worldwide are still not at school.

Since the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, women's participation in public life has grown significantly. Progress has been made toward the strengthening of gender equality and democracy. But there is still much to do, as women continue to face discrimination and remain under-represented at all levels of decision-making. We must all do better.

At the 2005 World Summit, world leaders renewed their commitments to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. They reaffirmed their conviction that 'progress for women is progress for all'. Let this be our common motto and common task – not just today, but each and every day.