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Women's voices need to be heard around the world

António Guterres

Women's rights are human rights. But in these troubled times, as our world becomes more unpredictable and chaotic, the rights of women and girls are being reduced, restricted and reversed.

Women's rights over their own bodies are questioned and undermined. Women are routinely targeted for intimidation and harassment in cyberspace and in real life.

Despite some improvements, leadership positions across the board are still held by men, and the economic gender gap is widening. We must change this, by empowering women at all levels, enabling their voices to be heard and giving them control over their own lives.

Denying the rights of women and girls is not only wrong in itself; it has a serious social and economic impact that holds us all back. Gender equality has a transformative effect that is essential to fully functioning communities, societies and economies.

Women's access to education and health services has benefits for their families and communities that extend to future generations. When women participate fully in the labour force, it creates opportunities and generates growth. Closing the gender gap in employment could add \$12 trillion to global GDP by 2025. On International Women's Day, let us all pledge to do everything we can to overcome entrenched prejudice, support engagement and activism, and promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

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The views expressed are personal

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