

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD

11 October 2023

Halfway to the 2030 deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals, the world is failing girls.

On current trends, the end of child marriage is 300 years away. If nothing changes, by 2030, 110 million young women and girls who should be in classrooms, won't be. And 340 million women and girls will still endure the grinding hardships of extreme poverty.

Old forms of discrimination against girls continue and in some cases are getting worse. Girls in Afghanistan are unable to exercise their most basic rights and freedoms, confined to their homes with no hope of education or economic independence.

New forms of bias and inequality are emerging. The digital divide means many girls are excluded from the online world. Algorithms based on the experience of men and boys are digitizing and amplifying sexism.

Yet around the world, girls are fighting back – confronting sexism, combatting stereotypes and creating change, on football pitches, in schools, and in the public square. We must stand with them.

My proposal for an SDG Stimulus to get the Goals on track is gaining traction. And we must invest in girls' leadership – the theme of this year's International Day of the Girl Child – to support girls to achieve their ambitions and to boost gender equality. When women and girls lead they can shift attitudes, create change, and advance policies and solutions that address their needs.

Women and girls can lead us to a fairer future. On this International Day of the Girl Child, let us amplify girls' voices, and recommit to working together to build a world where every girl can lead and thrive.
