

# LET'S BALANCE FOR BETTER



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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY  
8 MARCH 2019  
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA



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## **Thank you and I am very pleased to be here with you to celebrate International Women's Day.**

It is a huge privilege to be with you here in Ethiopia. And I am proud to be here in Addis Ababa. My brother, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has ensured gender parity among his Cabinet Ministers. I cannot congratulate the Prime Minister enough on how you are transforming Ethiopia and the continent.

My sister, President Sahle-Work Zewde is Ethiopia's first female Head of State and currently the only female Head of State across Africa.

I would like to congratulate the government of Ethiopia for its bold reforms and addressing the gender gap by appointing women to leadership positions in all sectors.

## **Balance for Better is the theme of International Women's Day 2019.**

The needs of women and girls around the world are still too pressing.

Half a billion women and girls around the world lack sufficient nutrition. And more than 15 million girls will never set foot in school.

It is an outrage that on average women today earn 20 per cent less than men for the same job for no reason other than their gender.

## **But the indignities and injustices do not stop there.**

One in three women has experienced violence. As many as 38% of murders of women are committed by a male intimate partner.

Sexual or physical violence triggers a range of health challenges, from anxiety and depression to substance abuse.

It hampers the ability of women and girls to access social services including sexual and reproductive health services, and makes it virtually impossible for young women to negotiate safer sex.

Today, some 460 adolescent girls will be infected with HIV. Even though we know what we need to do to reach adolescent girls with comprehensive HIV prevention skills. Today, an estimated 50 adolescent girls will die from AIDS-related causes. And every single one of those deaths is a needless one and could have been prevented.





It means doing what we know works. Social protection, education, including comprehensive sexuality education and HIV prevention services integrated with sexual and reproductive health services, improve the health of and empower young women and adolescent girls.

A South African study showed that HIV prevalence among girls who have finished high school was about half that among girls who had not.

It is time to break the vicious cycle of gender inequities, gender-based violence and HIV infection, once and for all. Oppression and power imbalances must be reversed. And harmful masculinities must be consigned to the history books. It is time to empower women and girls in all their diversities. Because Ending AIDS is as much about health as it is about righting power imbalances. This means prioritizing girls and young women in true partnership with them. It means providing adolescent girls and young women with more options and real choices.

**In closing, I urge all of you to shine a spotlight on gender inequality, whenever you see it, and celebrate success wherever it surfaces, whether it's a statehouse, or a schoolhouse or a boardroom.**

As we move ahead, let us commit to ensuring that every action we take is ushering us closer to a world where every girl and boy can fully enjoy their rights to health and education, where every woman and girl can live free from discrimination, harassment, violence and abuse, where power and leadership is shared equally and where each half of humanity respects and embraces the other half.

**Let's balance for better.**



