"To be truly transformative, the post-2015 development agenda must prioritize gender equality and women's empowerment. The world will never realize 100% of its goals if 50% of its people cannot realize their full potential." Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon8 March 2015 – The theme of International Women's Day 2015 was chosen to highlight the need for an equitable representation of women and girls in decision-making processes; in different aspects of life – health, education, livelihood – and political participation in a world that is free from violence and discrimination.

This year, the Day has special significance as it marks the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in which 189 governments committed to the full realization of women's rights. Twenty years later, many challenges are still to be addressed.

In health, WHO, in coordination with Member States and other UN agencies, has gone a long way in promoting women's health both global and regionally. The acceleration plans to reduce maternal and child mortality are under way in high-burden countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Efforts to prevent and control violence against women and girls have materialized in the development of a number of health sector guidelines and WHO draft global plan of action to strengthen the role of the health system to address interpersonal violence, in particular against women and girls, and against children. Work has been strengthened to prevent harmful practices against women and girls and to mainstream gender within technical programmes in the Organization and in the health sector at country level.

This year, WHO and its partners are working to review the progress made since countries signed pledges in the Beijing Declaration to put together a new global strategy for women's, children's and adolescents' health and to put women's health in the post-2015 sustainable development goals in the best way possible.

This Day represents a platform for renewed commitment for a more fruitful collaboration for an equitable world in which women's and girls' rights, including their right to health, are protected and promoted, and fully realized.

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