

8 March 2017 – Today the global community celebrates a very distinguished occasion, International Women's Day, under the inspirational slogan be bold for change.

Many achievements have been made for and by women in recent decades. We have witnessed a substantial reduction in maternal mortality ratio in our region through improved access to reproductive health services. Women are now playing greater catalyst roles in our societies and have become an agent of change for health and development.

However, many more challenges and gaps have also emerged, some of which are hindering women from achieving their ambitions and contributing to the development of their societies.

That is why WHO and its partners are working to enshrine the health of women in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. This means not only setting targets and indicators to improve health services for women, but also addressing the social determinants of health, foremost among which are education and income level. By doing so, we can ensure that in the future we will close the gender gap and bring health and well-being to all women – whoever they are, wherever they live.

It is a long journey and a long-awaited goal. Events such as International Women's Day can be an important vehicle to raise awareness and move us closer to gender parity.

On this International Women's Day, each one of us – women and men, governments and nongovernmental organizations, individuals and communities – can lead change within our own societies through joining hands, and working closely for women's health and development.

To every woman across the world, Happy Women's Day!

#### **Related link**

[The UN system in the Arab/MENA Region kicks off International Women's Day with an eye on Planet 50-50 by 2030](#)

Joint press release by UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, UN Women, ESCWA, FAO, OCHA, UNHCR, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNRWA, WFP, OHCHR, ILO, UNOPS, UN Habitat, and UNESCO

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