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PRESS RELEASE

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INTENSIFY INNOVATION BY AND FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS TO ENSURE GENDER EQUALITY

Accra, 8 March 2019 – On International Women’s Day this year, the world is focusing on innovative ways in which we can propel gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Under the global theme “*Think equal, build smart, innovate for change*”, the United Nations in Ghana is calling for the intensification of efforts to put innovation by women and girls, and innovation for women and girls, at the heart of initiatives to achieve gender equality in the country.

Despite notable progress over the years, discriminatory social norms on gender continue to impact negatively on the lives of both women and men in Ghana. Women’s education and economic empowerment are too often compromised by lack of adequate and sustained opportunities, support, and investments. Child marriage and teenage pregnancy remain a critical barrier to girls’ continued education, skills development and full transition into employment. Ghanaian women constitute 70 % of the informal sector workforce and many are low income earners with limited social security protection. Data shows that women and girls spend significant time in care provision for children and the elderly, and in performance of chores such as cooking, cleaning or fetching water and firewood for the household. Shared responsibility could significantly lessen the burden and allow a fuller engagement in the community and public life and improve the access to education and economic empowerment opportunities.

International Women’s Day, observed globally on March 8th each year, seeks to bring to the fore women’s rights and gender equality. Widely recognized as both the preconditions and accelerators for achieving sustainable development, women’s rights and gender equality are an integral part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) which promote prosperity for everyone. SDG #5 is an important framework for holding decision-makers accountable to end gender-based discrimination, all forms of violence, exploitation and harmful practices on women and girls, improve the access to education, sexual and reproductive health information and services, and economic opportunity and participation in decision-making.

“Innovation can help us address some of the barriers that women and girls face in accessing public services and opportunities. We should make it central to our efforts to promote women’s empowerment and in doing so, we need to make sure that women and girls are not only just consumers of innovation, but that they are given the space to be innovators themselves. The countless numbers of life-changing inventions created by women throughout history, prove

that they are capable to do so, when society doesn't get in their way", says the acting UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Sylvia Lopez-Ekra.

Let us encourage innovation and invest in technology to expand the access to opportunities and skills for women and men, facilitate the transition from education to employment, and close the gender gap. Women and girls must have opportunities to contribute to making real change, and help shape the policies, services and infrastructure that impact their lives.

Achieving a gender-equal world requires social innovations that work for both women and men and leave no one behind. From urban planning that focuses on community safety to e-learning platforms that take classrooms to women and girls, affordable and quality childcare centres, and technology shaped by women, innovation can take the race for gender equality to its finishing line by 2030.

On this International women's Day, the United Nations in Ghana celebrates all Ghanaian women and remains committed to ensure equal opportunities and participation in the development process in the country.

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