This year, as the international community assesses progress under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) since their implementation in 2000 and sets goals to be achieved by 2030, girls born at the turn of the millennium have reached adolescence, and the generation of girls born this year will be adolescents in 2030. As we reflect on the achievements of the past 15 years and plan sustainable development goals for the next 15, it is an opportune time to consider the importance of social, economic, and political investment in the power of adolescent girls as fundamental to breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination and to achieving equitable and sustainable development outcomes.

Adolescent girls have the right to a safe, educated, and healthy life, not only during these critical formative years, but also as they mature into women. If effectively supported during the adolescent years, girls have the potential to change the world – both as the empowered girls of today and as tomorrow’s workers, mothers, entrepreneurs, mentors, household heads, and political leaders. An investment in realising the power of adolescent girls upholds their rights today and promises a more equitable and prosperous future, one in which half of humanity is an equal partner in solving the problems of climate change, political conflict, economic growth, disease prevention, and global sustainability.

Over the last 15 years, the global community has made significant progress in improving the lives of girls during early childhood. In 2015, girls in the first decade of life are more likely to enrol in primary school, receive key vaccinations, and are less likely to suffer from health and nutrition problems than were previous generations. However, there has been insufficient investment in addressing the challenges girls face when they enter the second decade of their lives. This includes obtaining quality secondary and higher education, avoiding child marriage, receiving information and services related to puberty and reproductive health, and protecting themselves against unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease and gender-based violence.

As the global community launches the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for implementation over the next 15 years, it is a good time to recognise the achievements made in supporting young girls, while at the same time aspiring to support the current and upcoming generation of adolescent girls, to truly fulfil their potential as key actors in achieving a sustainable and equitable world. In recognition of the importance of investing in adolescent girls’ empowerment and rights, both today and in the future, the theme of International Day of the Girl Child for 2015 is: The Power of the Adolescent Girl: Vision for 2030.

UN agencies, Member States, civil society organizations, and private sector stakeholders are called on to commit to putting adolescent girls at the centre of sustainable development efforts by making the following critical investments in their present and future:

- Invest in high quality education, skills, training, access to technology and other learning initiatives that prepare girls for life, jobs, and leadership.
- Invest in health and nutrition suitable to the adolescent years, including puberty education, menstrual hygiene management, and sexual and reproductive health education and services.
- Promote zero tolerance against physical, mental, and sexual violence.
- Enact and consistently implement social, economic, and policy mechanisms to combat early marriage and female genital mutilation.
- Invest in the creation and maintenance of social and public spaces for civic and political engagement, creativity and talent enhancement.
- Promote gender-responsive legislation and policies across all areas especially for adolescent girls who are disabled, vulnerable and marginalized, and victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation.
The commitment by the global community to realising the potential of adolescent girls will directly translate into the girls as powerful and positive change agents for their own empowerment, for advancing gender equality and for the sustainable advancement of their nations.