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SECRETARY-GENERAL**

Video Message on International Women's Day

Costa Rica, 08/03/2022

Vice-President Campbell,
Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

It is an honor for me to share the commemoration of International Women's Day with this group of incredible women. I am currently visiting the Colegio superior de señoritas to meet with another group of incredible young women and this is the only reason I cannot be with you in person but I am with you in the same city.

Today is an opportunity to mark progress, identify the road forward, and renew our commitment to gender equality as the strong foundation needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

It is only with women and girls at the centre of our efforts that we have our best chance to succeed in addressing our current, and pressing, global challenges – from the climate emergency, to gender-based violence, to political divisions, to a sustainable recovery from this global pandemic.

I would like to congratulate you on your Regional Gender Agenda, which charts an ambitious path to advance women's rights and achieve equality.

The Agenda reflects commitments made by Member States in this region over the past 40 years, thanks to the efforts of women activists and feminist movements.

Women's civil society throughout Latin America and the Caribbean have championed change through difficult times, leading protests on women's sexual and reproductive health rights, working to end corruption and improve education, and contributing to drafting constitutional law.

Recent gains for women's rights in Argentina and Mexico give hope, as do the opportunities of a parity constitutional assembly in Chile, and similarly positive achievements elsewhere in the region.

I would also like to take this moment to recognize the work of Alicia Bárcena in her role as Executive Secretary of ECLAC. Her commitment and innovative proposals have made an important contribution to advancing gender equality, and she is a powerful voice for women's leadership everywhere.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

This year, International Women's Day aims at recognizing and celebrating the contribution and sacrifices of women

and girls who are leading efforts for women's rights for a more sustainable and climate-resilient future.

Women environmental leaders and activists are true heroes, fighting for a more just, sustainable world, often at risk of their own safety.

Latin America and the Caribbean has shown the world that it is possible to collectively build a roadmap for inclusive development. But despite this progress, there are still great challenges to achieving gender equality.

The pandemic has deepened inequality. Women's socio-economic rights have regressed; their physical autonomy has been under threat; and their full participation in decision-making continues to be limited.

Women have borne the burden of increased responsibilities in the home as schools shut and medical and elder care facilities have been closed or overwhelmed.

These inequalities have set us back immeasurably.

And this is a setback we cannot afford. We have less than 8 years remaining to realize our shared global agenda, to achieve a world that is equal and sustainable, and that we can be proud to leave for future generations. Achieving this is going to require accelerated effort and innovation, from governments, international organizations, the private sector

and civil society together. It is going to require intensifying our efforts to reverse inequalities of all kinds, including gender inequality.

On this International Women's Day let's recommit our energies to achieving true and irreversible gender equality. Because we all benefit when women have the opportunity to lead and rise for all.

Thank you.