**Message from EI General Secretary Fred van Leeuwen to commemorate International Day of the Girl Child**

**October 11th 2015**

There is no doubt that autumn 2015 in New York City will go down in history an auspicious autumn: the world literally ‘turned over a new leaf’ as we took stock of the unfinished business of the expired Millennium Development Goals, and turned our sights to the future with the signing of an historic agreement for new global [sustainable development goals (SDGS)](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/7891Transforming%20Our%20World.pdf).

It is an opportune moment to think about the crucial role that education plays in empowering girls, especially those who are most vulnerable and marginalised in all parts of the world. The evidence shows that the best investment that a family, community, or indeed a country, can make is by educating girls. This is because an educated girl is one who will be healthier throughout her life, and whose own children will also be healthier and more likely to be educated as a consequence. The more years of schooling a girl is able to complete, the less likely she is to have a child, to get married at an early age, to exploited, or to be involved in child labour. And later in life, a full cycle of quality education will stand a woman in good stead to find decent work and earn higher wages.

But over and beyond the catalytic effect that educating girls can have on the whole cycle of development, on this International Day of the Girl Child, the 32.5 million teachers represented by 396 associations and unions in 171 countries and territories that make up Education International, take an unequivocal stand in support of girls’ *right to education.* We recognise education as a human right that has an intrinsic value, and is the very cornerstone of our work as educators and education support personnel in all regions. It is this intrinsic value that makes educating girls a matter of social justice.

In 2015 we also marked the 20th year since the adoption of the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/about), adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. We stand with those who recognise the Beijing agreement as the most advanced international instrument on women’s rights ever agreed, highlighting as it does the importance of education to the empowerment of women and girls, and the advancement of their rights.

In adopting a [resolution on school-related gender-based violence](http://download.ei-ie.org/SiteDirectory/7thWorldCongress/Documents/CONGRESS%20RESOLUTIONS/Final/EN/3.01E_SRGBV_FINAL.docx) at its 7th World Congress in Ottawa this past July, the membership of Education International signals it unwavering commitment to continue working towards the eradication of the pernicious barriers that prevent girls, the world over, from enjoying their right to education.

Before they can be expected to empower others, all girl needs to be empowered to help themselves; education is the first step on that journey of empowerment.