

Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia
Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC

International Women's Day is a day for every woman and girl, of our nation and our world.

Indeed, it is a day for *all* of us: *one* day, *each* year that asks us to think again about the progress we've made towards ensuring that women and girls have every opportunity to participate in life, work and society on an equal basis with men and boys.

It is a day that carries so many messages and memories according to the vastly different lives we lead. But it is not a day for looking inward. Rather, it is a day to share our stories and pledges so that triumph and inspiration may ease and, in time override, despair.

This year's International Women's Day flags the start of an important campaign to address the greatest barrier to the advancement and empowerment of women and girls in developing countries – poverty.

I am proud to be one of the women invited by UNIFEM to speak up for the “5 Women. 5 Reasons to End Poverty” campaign.

The theme of this year's International Women's Day is "Empowering Women to End Poverty by 2015" - one of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals.

Women represent 70 per cent of the world's poor. If we are to reach our goal within the next five years, we *all* need to focus hard on putting in place the measures that will secure gender equality for these women.

There are huge challenges – my visit to Africa provided stark examples of the impact of poverty on women and their families. Equality of pay and entitlements pale in the face of the daily, debilitating pressures of putting food on the table, escaping violence, living with HIV/AIDs, and struggling to keep a family healthy.

They are challenges that women and men *more* fortunate can and must take up. I urge you to work with us to put human rights and dignity ahead of poverty for our world's women.