Dear XXXXXX,

**MEP Written Declaration calling for an UN ‘International Day of the Girl’**

Through the enclosed Written Declaration, MEP Edite Estrela, Vice-Chair of the Women’s Rights and Gender Equality committee in the European Parliament, and the co-submitting MEPs Véronique Mathieu (EPP), Jean Lambert (Green), Katarína NEVEĎALOVÁ (S&D) and Roberta Angelilli (EPP) as well as international organisations all over the world call on you to support a global movement calling for 22 September to be recognised as the UN’s International Day of the Girl.

As a Member Organization of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts which has as its mission “to enable girls and young women to fulfil their fullest potential as responsible citizens of the world,” we are calling on the members of the European Parliament to support an upcoming Canadian resolution at the UN General Assembly to declare **September 22nd as an ‘International Day of the Girl’.** An International Day is a powerful way to highlight the particular needs and rights of girls, and to advocate for greater action and investment to enable girls to reach their full potential.

In Europe and beyond, girls are one of the most disadvantaged groups on the planet. The creation of an UN ‘International Day of the Girl’ would provide a powerful tool with which to focus the world’s attention on the particular plight of girls, who face dual discrimination on account of their age and gender. Although girls and boys are entitled to the same human rights, girls face greater challenges in accessing them.

Across the world, research has shown that girls are less likely to be enrolled in school, have less access to medical care and are more likely to suffer from malnutrition. They experience more violence and sexual harassment and are more likely to be forced into an early marriage, be trafficked, sold or coerced into the sex trade, or become infected with HIV.

**Did you know:**

* Pregnancy is the leading cause of death for girls between the ages of 15 and 19 in developing countries, with girls who give birth before the age of 15 five times more likely to die in childbirth than women in their twenties;
* Girls under 16 years old are the victims of approximately 50 per cent of sexual assaults worldwide;
* More than 80 million girls in developing countries were married before their 18th birthday, without their consent;
* Young women have a significantly higher risk for becoming infected with the HIV virus, with nearly two-thirds of new infections worldwide occurring in young women between 15 and 24 years old.

As a result of their situation and lower social status, girls are often forced to suffer this injustice in silence.

It has been said many times that investing in girls is key to reducing global poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The International Day of the Girl would not only serve as a global reminder of the particular challenges girls face, but it would also provide a unique opportunity to celebrate their potential as powerful agents of change within their own families, communities and nations. It can help drive economic growth and poverty reduction, the benefits of which would be felt not only by the girls themselves but by their families, their communities and their countries.

The Written Declaration is available for signing every Strasbourg plenary week in front of the plenary room, and during Parliamentary Sessions in Brussels it can be signed it in the office PHS 02A30, Members' Activities Unit.

We do hope you will be able to support this initiative to give girls a global voice.

Yours sincerely,