

CELEBRATING PROGRESS AND PIONEERING THE FUTURE

International Women's Day

Kim Scouller



As the world gears up to celebrate International Women's Day (IWD), it's a time to reflect on the incredible strides we've made toward gender equality and to recognize the work we have yet to do. International Women's Day, celebrated annually on March 8th, serves as a global call to action to honor the achievements of women, raise awareness about women's equality, and advocate for accelerated gender parity.

■ Looking Back at the Journey

The origins of IWD date back to the early 20th century, starting with the labor movements led by women for women in North America and Europe. It has since evolved into a global day of recognition and celebration in many countries across the world. Since it was first recognized by the United Nations in 1975, IWD continues to grow in prominence, with each year focusing on different themes to address various aspects of women's rights and equality.

■ Inspiring Inclusion

The IWD theme in 2024 is **"Inspire Inclusion."** We help create a better world when the inclusion of women is understood and valued. And, when women are included, they feel a sense of belonging, relevance, and empowerment. Fostering a culture of inclusivity involves challenging stereotypes, fighting bias, broadening perceptions, and striving for gender equality in every aspect of life. It's about

creating environments where everyone, irrespective of their gender, has the opportunity to thrive.

■ Celebrating Achievements

Women have made significant progress in various fields, breaking barriers, and setting new standards. From winning Nobel Prizes to leading countries, from groundbreaking scientific discoveries to monumental achievements in literature, arts, sports, and beyond, women's contributions have been pivotal. Celebrating these achievements not only recognizes the hard work and talent of women but also serves as inspiration for young girls everywhere to dream big and pursue their passions without constraints.

■ Acknowledging Challenges

Despite the advancements, women worldwide continue to face significant challenges. Gender-based violence, discrimination, unequal pay, lack of access to education and healthcare, and underrepresentation in political and corporate leadership are issues that still demand urgent attention. International Women's Day serves as a reminder of the work that remains to be done in addressing these disparities and ensuring a world where gender equality is not just an aspiration but a reality.

■ Looking Forward: Pioneering the Future

As we celebrate IWD, it's also a time to look forward. The day encourages us to think about how we can contribute to a more equal future. This involves advocating for policies that support gender equality, mentoring the next generation of female leaders, supporting women-owned businesses, and continuing to raise awareness about the importance of gender parity.

International Women's Day is a call to action for everyone to play a part in creating a gender-equal world. It's a day to celebrate how far we have come and to gear up for the work that remains. Let's use this day to commit to making a difference, in big ways and small, in our communities and around the world. Together, we can create a future where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential, free from gender biases and limitations.