



AS IT IS

UN Celebrates International Women's Day

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Countries around the world are celebrating International Women's Day (IWD) on Wednesday, March 8.

The United Nations says the **theme** it is celebrating this year is DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality.

The U.N. says that from the earliest days of computing, women have **contributed** to information technology. But, it says those contributions have been little recognized or valued.

The international organization says 37 percent of women do not use the internet. It also says 259 million fewer women than men have access to the internet. Yet, women account for very close to half the world's population. The U.N. says women are largely underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics careers.

"Bringing women into technology results in more creative solutions and has greater potential for innovations that meet women's needs and promote gender equality," says the U.N.'s website.

For this year's International Women's Day, U.S. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a statement, "Let us work together – across governments, the private **sector** and civil society – to build a more inclusive, just, and **prosperous** world for women, girls, men, and boys everywhere."

What Is International Women's Day?

The IWD has its roots in the social and labor movement in the United States.

It began in New York City on March 8, 1857, when female workers marched in protest of unfair working conditions and unequal rights in clothing factories. The workers called for a shorter workday and better pay, the [National Archives](#) says.

On March 8 of 1908, women workers again marched through New York City to protest child labor and poor working conditions, and demand women's right to vote.

The first recorded celebration internationally was on March 19, 1911, in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland. At that time, over a million people came out to support women's rights.

After World War II, several countries started to celebrate women's day on March 8. Two years later, the U.N. officially declared that date as International Women's Day in 1977. Some countries, including China, Russia and Uganda, also recognize it as a public holiday.

Past U.N. celebrations have included the issues of climate change, rural women and HIV/AIDS.

And, since 2007, the U.S. State Department has presented the International Women of Courage Award to more than 180 women in 80 countries.

I'm Jill Robbins.

Hai Do wrote this story for Learning English with information from the United Nations and the National Archives.

Words in This Story

theme - n. the main subject that is being discussed

contribute - v. to help cause something to happen

access - n. a way of getting near or at something

sector - n. an area of the economy

prosperous - adj. having success
