

The Inaugural International Day of the Girl Child

WED 10 OCTOBER 2012

Prime Minister

Canberra

I'm especially delighted to do so as this country's first female Prime Minister.

But also as the Adelaide girl who grew up safe, valued and loved, and received that standard of education I

For most young girls, growing up in a country like Australia is a time of remarkable opportunity.

To be encouraged to think for ourselves.

To have choices and the freedom to exercise them.

To manage our careers, our relationships and our health as we see fit.

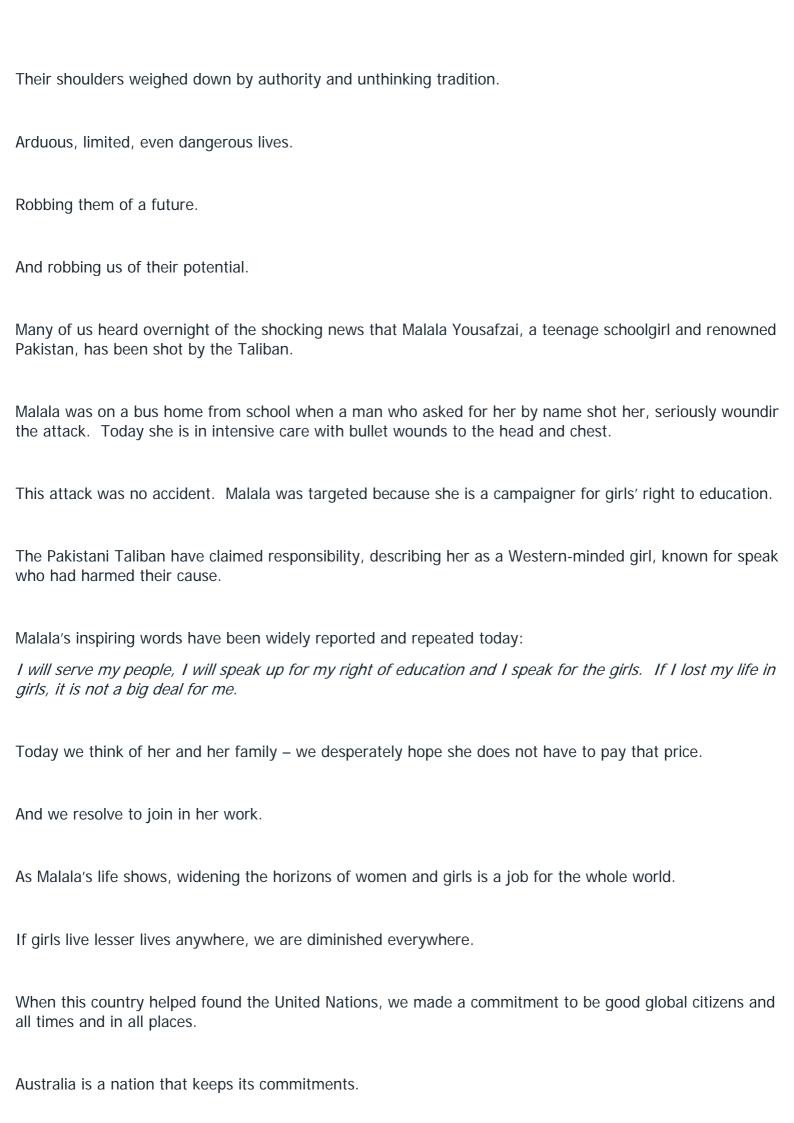
But for many girls and young women – here at home and especially in the developing world – the experience

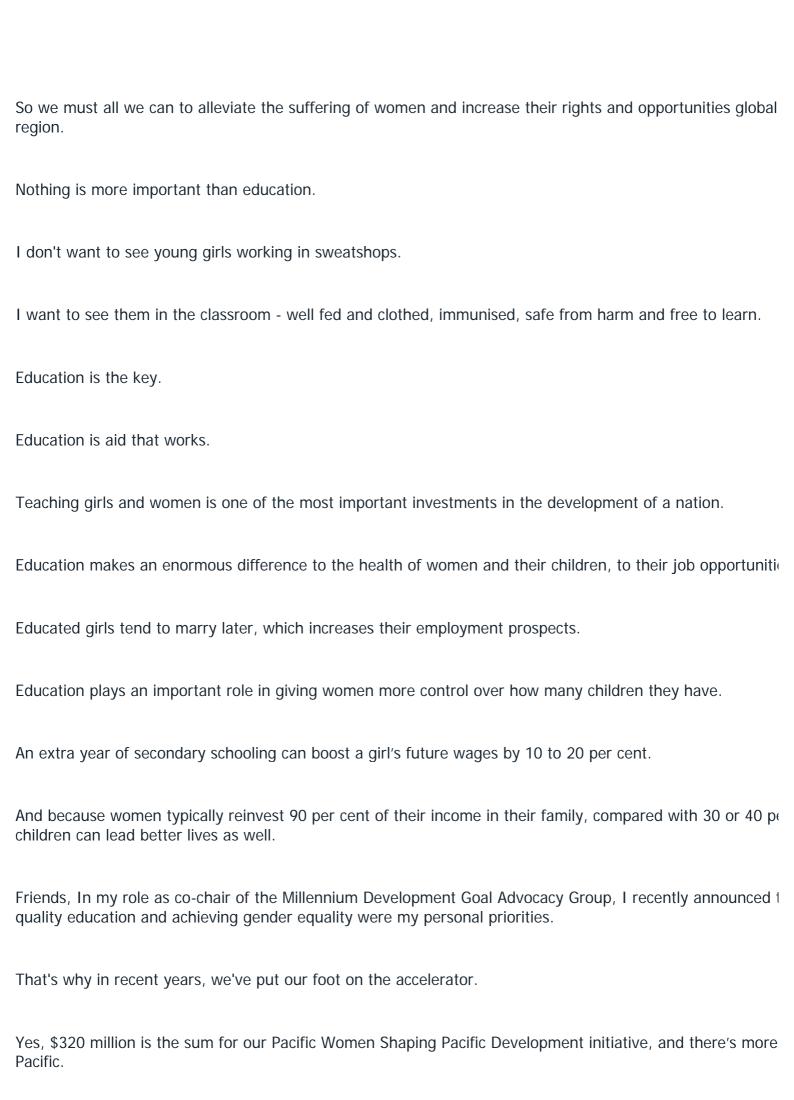
Like the girl forced to work at home and watch her brother go off to school.

The girl forcibly married to someone she doesn't know before she has even come of age.

Or the young woman who dwells in daily fear of violence from those closest to her.

In many cases, they live lives unchanged from the days of their grandmothers and great-grandmothers.





Australian aid means half a million children receiving support to go to school in Papua New Guinea. It means 165,000 school places for girls in Indonesia. It means 140,000 girls being able to attend middle and secondary school in Pakistan. And in Afghanistan, we have made a significant contribution to an international effort which has increased so million in 2001 to more than seven million today – including more than 2.7 million girls. But for all the opportunities being opened up, there are plenty of girls being left behind – abroad and here a That's why the United Nations has created this day of observance - the International Day of the Girl Child. This is the first, and it's been a long time coming. It's day for symbolism - and symbols are important because where our heart and ideals go, our actions will 1 Friends, Gender equality is one of the great goals of our time. The first-wave feminists started the last century with such high hopes yet we reached the year 2000 with the Let this century be different and let us be the ones who make it different. May this be the century when every girl is born wanted. Where she grows up free from want and fear. And lives out her years nurtured in dignity and abounding in opportunity. That is our commitment to the women and girls of today and those of future generations. That is the hope in which I declare the first international Day of the Girl Child officially launched.