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PRESS RELEASE

All Women Should Know, Understand, and Exercise their Rights

“The theme of this year’s International Women’s Day - Leave No Woman Behind - is a necessary reminder that many women are still disadvantaged by structural inequalities and gender bias in our society,” Dr Evelyn Collins CBE, Chief Executive of the Equality Commission said today.

“It is certainly true that, through the tireless campaigning and painstaking work of many courageous women - and some men - there are now better opportunities, more freedom of action and broader horizons for women in our society,” Dr Collins said. “But it is undeniable that inequality between men and women is still an issue, still important, in the 21st century. We live in a world where sexism and outdated attitudes remain a huge problem, where women are too often judged by how they look and not what they do or say, and where harassment and sex discrimination are still too frequent in the workplace.”

Dr Michael Wardlow, Chief Commissioner of the Equality Commission, is marking International Women’s Day with a visit to Belfast City Hall to meet Lord Mayor, Councillor Nuala McAllister, and discuss Equality Commission policy priorities in gender and other equality areas. “There are persistent inequalities between men and women, and the Commission’s priorities in tackling them cover social attitudes, education, employment, caring, public life, violence, healthcare, social protection and the law”, Dr Wardlow said.

Other Equality Commissioners and staff are also out and about throughout Northern Ireland during the week of International Women’s Day. Eileen Chan-Hu will be visiting women’s centres in Belfast; Helen Ferguson is speaking to the Rural Women’s Network in Co Tyrone; and Senior Legal Officer Mary Kitson will be talking to Traveller women in Belfast about their rights.

“We are also marking the contribution made by companies who support women in STEM careers,” Dr Collins said. “I recently visited Thales in East Belfast, which has made great strides in this field. Commissioner Judith Gillespie is visiting Terex in

Dungannon, and the Head of Policy, Research and Compliance at the Commission, Eileen Lavery, is meeting with Hyster-Yale in Craigavon.”

Dr Collins said. “The Commission works to ensure that all women know about, understand and can exercise their rights. We are committed to the task of challenging discrimination and inequality wherever we find it and working towards legislative and policy change.”