



Science, Technology & Innovation for
the Sustainable Development Goals



Virtual Side Event on the margins of the 6th Annual Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals

Gender Equality in Science, Technology and Innovation: Towards an Inclusive STI Ecosystem and
Connectivity for All

May 5 at 8 AM EST, 2021

Concept Note

Co-Organizers: The Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations, the Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations, the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, the World Intellectual Property Organization and the World Food Programme.

Background: While Covid-19 has had a profound effect on women, 2020 was in other ways a milestone year for gender equality as the world commemorated the twenty fifth anniversary of the Fourth Conference on Women. Women around the world have been serving on the frontlines of the COVID-19 response. Women contribute to better-informed decisions so that the outcomes, and policies and laws can work for all. Recognizing the existing constraints to women's participation and leadership, the sixty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65) called for measures to enable young women and girls to successfully grow into leadership positions in public and private spheres by ensuring their full and equal access to education, technology and skills development, leadership and mentorship programmes. The year 2021 is a moment to take stock of progress, celebrate achievements, and reflect on the gaps and the ways and means of tackling them. One of these gaps is in the Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) sphere, where women remain under-represented, including in research, leadership and entrepreneurship. The contribution of women in these STI fields is important not only because we need the totality of human potential and ingenuity to address the global challenges that we face, but also to ensure that all challenges are identified and that all solutions also work for women and girls. STI must serve the interests and needs of all in society.

Much has been said and published on the gender-based obstacles faced by women in the fields of STI - ranging from societal constraints, stereotyping, lack of mentorship, unequal access to technology, funding and other resources, non-inclusive workplace cultures – to name a few. The gender gap is also more pronounced at the leadership and other senior levels. There are challenges to be addressed with the leaky pipeline of women into these fields, but also actions to be taken to create more inclusive workplaces and ecosystems to retain and support women in their STI career advancement. All societal actors have a role to play including governments, private sector, academia, civil society, industry bodies and individuals.

Cognizant of the importance of equal access and contribution of women to the development of STI for sustainable development, a number of UN system entities have increasingly sharpened their focus to achieve gender equality within their respective mandates – through research and analysis of data, capacity building, awareness building, policy advice and initiatives, including to support government decision makers as they devise policies and embrace practices to attract and retain women in STI. While promoting understanding of the UN system engagement on this front is needed, of equal importance is the sharing of field practices and policies that have worked in bringing the changes needed to narrow the gender gap in STI.

Objectives: The Political Declaration adopted in 2020 on the occasion of the twenty fifth anniversary of the Fourth Conference on Women recognized, inter alia, that new challenges have emerged requiring intensified efforts for the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action including supporting women’s and girls’ participation in all sectors, especially those in which they are underrepresented, in particular science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and strengthening international cooperation on these issues. It is from this perspective, that the objectives of the event find context - aiming at showcasing selected national experiences/initiatives from different regions in support of the equal participation of women in STI, and inspiring others to forge enabling and inclusive STI environments to retain female talents. Participants will also be invited to share their thoughts on policies that can increase the participation and retention of women in STI and share examples of government policy practices that are working to achieve this result.

Guiding questions:

- What are the key policy areas national governments and the UN could focus on to create a women-friendly STI ecosystem?
- What have we learned from emerging practice in digital upskilling and reskilling for women and girls? What are the obstacles to scaling them up?
- How do approaches to closing the digital divide for women differ from other groups that are being left behind?
- How does empowering women in STI contribute to bridging the gender gap in the era of the 4th Industrial Revolution?

Format: The event will be held virtually via Zoom

Register online at: https://unesco-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_9vEsIVmDRySIsKKm53HIXw

Program

Welcome remarks by

Mr. Markus Woltran, Programme Officer, United Nations Office of Outer Space Affairs.

Opening Addresses

H.E. Ambassador Francisco António Duarte Lopes, Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations

Mr. Rene Ruidiaz, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations

Panelists

Ms. Mónica Zalaquett, Minister of Women's Affairs and Gender Equity of Chile and Chair of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean

Dr. Maysoun Ibrahim, Board Member and Chairperson of the Innovation Supporter Network (ISN), the Higher Council for Innovation and Excellence

Ms. Cassie Lee, Co-Founder, Brooke Owens Foundation

Ms. Funmilola Ikeolu Fagbola, Founder of the Rural Girls in Technology (RuGiT), 2019 L'Oréal-UNESCO *For Women in Science* Young Talent Sub-Saharan Africa

Mrs. Baraah Alsaïd Ramadan, World Food Programme's EMPACT 2020 graduate

Closing remarks

Mr. Jean-Martin Bauer, World Food Programme

The event will be moderated by Mr. Markus Woltran, Programme Officer, United Nations Office of Outer Space Affairs.

This event supports the work of the UN Inter-Agency Task Team Group on Gender and STI for SDGs. The Group is co-led by ITU, UNESCO and WIPO and is supported by UN-DESA as Secretariat for the IATT. Its members also include ECLAC, ESCWA, IAEA, ICGEB, ITC, UNCTAD, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNOOSA, WFP and WMO.

