



CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**International Day of Women and Girls in Science
“Investment in Women and Girls in Science
for Inclusive Green Growth”
11 February 2019 (10:00-10:45)**

**President of ECOSOC
Opening Remarks**

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be with you today to celebrate the fourth International Day of Women and Girls in Science. Science and gender equality are both vital for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They can help to eradicate poverty, achieve food security, fight diseases, improve education, address climate change, among others.

Sustainable development and inclusive green growth require new and better science. It has been demonstrated that when women contribute their particular perspectives,

approaches and priorities to research and development, the questions asked and the research results are more varied and more societally relevant.

Although science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields are widely regarded as critical to national economies, so far, most countries have not achieved gender equality in STEM. At present, the global average percentage of female researchers is 28.8 per cent and only 35 per cent of all students enrolled in STEM related fields of study are women. We are losing a critical mass of talent, thoughts and ideas, which hinders countries from reaching their maximum development potential.

As of 2016, only 30 per cent of all countries with data available on the national share of women researchers had reached parity. Even countries that have reached gender parity in terms of researchers are still facing important challenges in achieving it in all aspects, since vertical and horizontal segregation persist as barriers.

Women occupy a small minority of top-level positions, despite an improvement in recent years and only 20 women have been awarded a Nobel Prize in a scientific discipline to date.

The 2030 Agenda includes a bold commitment "to leave no one behind." This promise, which has a strong connection to gender equality, requires national and international statistical systems to shine a light on intersecting inequalities. We need to collect and analyse data that are systematically disaggregated by sex, age, income, location, disability, race and ethnicity and other relevant factors.

Despite efforts to bridge the gender gaps in STEM education and science and engineering careers, gaps still exist at different levels of education and career progression. These gaps

are partly a consequence of extant long-term STI policies at various levels. We need a holistic approach.

Promoting the participation of women and girls in science means changing mindsets, fighting gender stereotypes and biases that limit girls' passions, expectations and professional goals since their early childhood. Women leaders can be catalysts for change, as they serve to empower other women in the same professions and act as role models.

To unleash women's innovation potential, we must address the root causes of occupational segregation, in particular in science and technology, by systematically tackling gender stereotypes and the unequal distribution of unpaid care work.

Excellencies,

Globalization, new technologies, changing labour markets, and transnational environmental and political challenges demand new approaches. The gender dimension must be considered in the fourth Industrial Revolution, considering that artificial intelligence can be skewed by the unconscious bias or prejudices of algorithm programmers.

Learners all around the world must be equipped with the necessary skills to navigate unexpected challenges ahead. The skills mismatch is a global one, calling for more inclusive and future focused quality education and training systems.

Excellencies,

This year, I will be convening the High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development under ECOSOC's auspices from 9 to 18 July, completing the first cycle of the HLPF. We will be reviewing a delicate set of sustainable development goals (SDGs), addressing quality education (SDG 4) as well as sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent work (SDG 8); inequalities (SDG 10); climate action (SDG 13); peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions (SDG 16) and means of implementation (SDG 17).

And this year, the HLPF Summit, at the Heads of State and Government level in September, will review overall progress on the 2030 Agenda and all 17 SDGs. The HLPF Summit will identify progress and persisting and emerging challenges, provide political guidance on implementation, and mobilize further action to accelerate implementation. I am confident that it will reaffirm the political will at the highest level to continue implementing the 2030 Agenda and addressing the remaining obstacles.

Your focus on "Investment in Women and Girls in Science for Inclusive Green Growth" this year is, therefore, very timely.

If we join hands - governments, the private sector, civil society, and individual citizens across the world - we can achieve our shared goals.

I thank you.