

# Press Release

## **Graduate Women International calls for states and policy makers to actively promote the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) to women students**

Geneva, Switzerland, November 17 2015- This International Students Day, Graduate Women International (GWI) calls for states and policy makers to take the opportunity to facilitate greater uptake of women into science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects. As four key strands of research and technological development, it is critical that women's contribution in these fields is increased and integrated. Despite some improvement, the global average of women in STEM is still at less than parity.

Only 10% of the global engineering workforce and 30% of all science researchers in the world are female<sup>1</sup>. Just 6% of Chief Executive Officers at the top 100 tech companies are women<sup>2</sup>. Schools and universities must make these subjects attractive for girls, by challenging gender stereotypes at an early age, and by promoting positive role models of women who have achieved in these fields.

Investigation into the factors that dissuade women from following these subjects indicate that cultural and social norms stream girls and boys into different academic fields during primary and secondary school, which continues into tertiary education and eventual professions. Some studies have highlighted a sense of isolation, biased professional evaluations and a lack of sponsors, role models, and mentors as contributing to later workforce decisions to avoid or leave STEM fields. Low salaries, long working hours and a conflict in work-life integration have also been cited as a cause in the high attrition rate of women in technology.

Catherine Bell, President of GWI states: "The full participation of women in the fields of STEM is an economic necessity. National economies stand to benefit from higher productivity if more women participated within the labour force, particularly in STEM where diversity of ideas is key to innovation. States, education sectors and industries must make a concerted effort in the recruitment, retention and promotion of women to the highest levels in STEM."

Graduate Women International (GWI) is a membership-based international NGO based in Geneva, Switzerland, with presence in over 60 countries. Founded in 1919, GWI is the leading girls' and women's global organisation advocating for women's rights, equality and empowerment through access to quality education and training up to the highest levels. GWI is in special consultative status with ECOSOC and is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO and ILO.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.uis.unesco.org/ScienceTechnology/Pages/women-in-science-leaky-pipeline-data-viz.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.techrepublic.com/article/diversity-stats-10-tech-companies-that-have-come-clean/>