

Science and Technology: for women too!

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Science and Technology play a major role in today's fast changing world. They are key drivers in today's economies as twin pillars of progress in knowledge and quality of life for all humankind and women need to have an equal access and benefit. A few days ago I was at the International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) in Trieste, Italy, and I was reminded of the Nobel Laureate and ICTP founder, Abdus Salam, who believed that the gap between rich and poor nations was one of science and technology, and in 1988, he wrote that *"in the final analysis, creation, mastery and utilisation of modern science and technology is basically what distinguishes the South from the North. On science and technology depend the standards of living of a nation"*.

Although our everyday lives seem increasingly dependent on technology and on the science behind it, half of the planet population – women and girls – continue to be excluded from participating fully in science. According to a study conducted in 14 countries, the probability for female students of graduating with a Bachelor's degree, Master's degree and Doctor's degree in science-related field are 18%, 8% and 2% respectively, while the percentages of male students are 37%, 18% and 6% as well as professional scientists, engineers, and mathematicians and STEM teachers, researchers and inventors www.unwomen.org/en/news/.

This is so not only in developing countries but also in developed countries. Indeed, in the first gender benchmarking study of its kind (carried out in 2012 by Sophia Huyer and Nancy Hafkin) found that numbers of women in the science, technology and innovation fields are alarmingly low in the world's leading economies, and are actually on the decline in others.

Typically, it is a reflection of two major gender gaps—the education gap specially in secondary and tertiary education, and the training and skills development gap that still persists in most countries.

Today, we face many global challenges that affect each and every one of us. Borders are only in our mind and the scientific images we constantly get from satellites and the International Space Station confirm that we live on a fragile planet. We need to empower all its inhabitants, not just half of them (men) in order for us to achieve our global developmental needs and visions. We need the 100% of the work force, brains, potential, creativity, multifaceted vision, and outlooks.

Therefore, gender equality and women's empowerment become pre-conditions for the sustainable development for our planet and our future. Studies have already shown that when there are men and women in company women outperform with men only!! [https://www.grantthornton.global/en/press/press-releases-2015/diverse-boards-in-india-uk-and-us-outperform-male-only-peers-by-us\\$655bn/](https://www.grantthornton.global/en/press/press-releases-2015/diverse-boards-in-india-uk-and-us-outperform-male-only-peers-by-us$655bn/)

Over the past 30 years, the United Nations and its agencies have realized the gender-gap in science and its role in the birth of social inequalities in countries. In its efforts to contrast this situation and allow full and equal access to and participation in science for women and girls, the United Nations Assembly adopted [resolution A/RES/70/212](#) declaring 11 February as the [International Day of Women and Girls in Science](#). The UN also included “gender equality” as one of the goals of the Sustainable Development Agenda.

Have you suffered any gender bias in your career path? Have you experienced difficulties when you tried to reach your objectives? The floor is yours, please share your views with us.