

Today higher education is under threat from the same economic policy pressures currently besetting other areas of government funding, including welfare and health care. The economic imperatives of governments across the globe are such that the higher education sector in many countries has faced massive funding restrictions throughout the last decade, which raises serious questions as to the quality of the education they offer. Such cutbacks have forced many tertiary institutions to reduce staff and courses, while concurrently increasing class sizes. In the absence of adequate funding, increasing student numbers have caused further problems in access to books, computers and other resources. Furthermore, the introduction of up-front fees for prospective students will make access to education extremely difficult for those without substantial financial means, especially women.

Education is not a privilege, but a basic and fundamental right. An education, moreover, is not merely vocational training but an enlivening of the mind through active engagement with new and challenging ideas. In an age where knowledge can be disseminated so easily it is unacceptable that so many should find it impossible or financially prohibitive to have access to it. If this situation is allowed to persist it will mean that those who face economic barriers to gaining access to an education will be consigned not only to continuing economic disadvantage, but to a widening knowledge deficit that no society should be prepared to tolerate.

2) **RESOLUTION ON HIGHER EDUCATION**
Proposed by the French Association of University Women

The 26th Conference resolves:

that national federations and associations (NFAs):

1. take account of the complexity and interrelationships of the psychosocial, educational and sociological factors which in society and in higher education determine the orientation of girls towards certain fields of study; and
2. encourage governments to strengthen, in the field of higher education, the knowledge, abilities and know-how which will prepare girls for an employment market making ever increasing demands in terms of adaptability, mastery of new technologies and leadership capacities.

Supporting statement:

As a consequence of school orientation procedures girls are still under-represented in scientific studies and in certain other fields of education. This affects their future careers, access to decision-making, and representation in political bodies,

Action plan:

1. make studies and investigations which contribute reliable data;
2. provide information to teaching staff and the concerned services, using various means of communication;
3. organize symposia bringing together influential figures in different areas (teaching, research, and administration including educational administration)