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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Graduate Women International (GWI), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[29 January 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.

Advancing Green Education: Graduate Women International Urges States to Embrace Green Education for Sustainable Future of Women and Girls

Despite progress, women and girls continue to face obstacles to education due to human development. To address this challenge constructively, the States must transition towards a renewed, sustainable education model.

Graduate Women International (GWI) is optimistic that “Green Education” can serve as an overarching global concept under which different and context-sensitive approaches to the future of education can be integrated. GWI embrace this emerging concept as a significant solution to address the urgent challenges facing education systems globally. Green Education, as conceptualized by GWI, encompasses a universal approach that integrates environmental consciousness into its 105-year mission for the safe access to quality education and lifelong learning.

GWI acknowledges that the construct of "Green Education" facilitates progress towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, notably targets Goals 4.5 and 4.7, which focus on gender equality and sustainable development education. Integrating these targets into education ensures learners acquire adequate skills for progressing sustainability, education rights, and gender equality.[1] Therefore, GWI expressly urges States to reaffirm their commitment to SDG 4, noting that Green Education emphasizes the inclusion of environmental principles, sustainable practices, and climate change education within formal and informal learning environments.

GWI stands in full support of UNESCO’s The Greening Education Partnership, a global initiative that takes a whole-of-system approach to support countries to tackle climate crisis by harnessing the critical role of education.[2]

The concept of Green Education suggests that, in a rapidly changing world and to ensure younger generations access and quality of education is upheld, a transformation within the education system is a critical starting point.[3] Indeed, GWI notes that a Green Education approach to learning aims to incentivize action to empower learners around the world with the necessary skills and values required for a more inclusive and sustainable future within the context of a transition toward greener economies.

Recognizing the disproportionate impact of climate change on vulnerable communities, GWI emphasizes the importance of incorporating Green Education principles into educational frameworks. This will equip learners with the knowledge and skills necessary to sustain their future. By working collaboratively with states and civil society, GWI advocates for the adoption of Green Education principles in education systems worldwide. GWI is optimistic that Green Education can serve as a universal concept that allows for innovative and context-sensitive approaches to the future of education to be integrated, making it simpler to comprehend.

Green Education has the potential to shape a sustainable future, but adoption faces significant hurdles due to varying societal capacities influenced by context, culture, and environmental degradation. Comprehensive support, training, and equitable access to resources and funding for sustainable education infrastructure are vital to overcome these challenges. Urgent policy revision and collaboration are necessary to ensure Green Education is accessible to all learners and mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change.

Recalling its statement to the 48th session of the Human Rights Council in August 2021, GWI underscores the well-documented adverse effects of climate change on the most vulnerable groups, especially women and girls.[4] Evidence indicates regions with extreme climate changes often see disruptions in schooling, leading to fewer years of education.[5] Prolonged absence from school reduces the likelihood of return, highlighting the urgent need to address the nexus of climate change and education.[6]

Reaffirming that disruptions in education deprive those out-of-school of the skills and specific knowledge needed to respond to and adapt to environmental challenges effectively.[7] Green Education represents a powerful framework that emphasizes the need for innovative educational approaches that overcome education barriers caused by environmental changes. As conveyed in several GWI Policy Resolutions, education for women and girls remains the most consistent pathway for states to transform societies' economic and social well-being, including climate.[8]

Beyond States' actions, GWI, a civil society organization, drives impactful action particularly in shaping the future of Green Education.[9] For example, to commemorate United Nations the International Day of Education (24 January 2024), GWI facilitated a global discussion among its global network of graduate women, resulting in a publication titled, "International Day of Education 2024 GWI Discussion Network Topic: Green Education." [10] GWI leadership, members, and interns, worldwide contributed insightful perspectives, envisioning a future where Green Education plays a vital role in shaping education policy. Insights about the current and future of Green Education were recorded from GWI affiliates in Australia, Canada, Egypt, France, India, Netherlands, Scotland, Switzerland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

Highlights of insightful publication:

"A green school provides a daily lesson in the importance of environmental sustainability to Australia's future; the building itself can be the best learning resource of all." (Australian Graduate Women, Inc.)

"Creating an environment from an early age where we can connect to nature is essential for self-enforcement in protecting and valuing nature. Education is the key!" "Institutions of learning need to integrate climate education, which is aligned to their surroundings and environment. It should be backed by action. This should happen from elementary school to university." (British Federation of Women Graduates)

"Education at all levels is crucial to climate change adaptation and mitigation. Teachers need professional training and better resources with up-to-date information on climate science [...] and a better grasp of the economics and politics of climate." (Canadian Federation of University Women)

"Green Education is the intersectionality of economics, education, and environment to health, both physical and mental well-being. Promoting sustainable practices improves access to clean air, water, and food, benefiting women and girls." "Our role is to influence the decision makers. Let us encourage sustainable practices to promote the development of innovative solutions to mitigate the impacts of climate change." (Women Graduates-USA).

"Educational programs that address Green Education need to be gender-sensitive and realistic; they have to respect the cultural, economic, and social variety of environments of women and girls around the globe." (Egypt Association of University Women)

"The Government's educational goals require programmes that enable students to respect the diverse ethnic and cultural heritage of New Zealand people, with acknowledgment of the special place of Māori and New Zealand's role in the Pacific." (Graduate Women New Zealand)

"Despite the news of never-ending violence in the areas of war overshadowing any discourse on the future, the issue of the survival of our earth from the ecological point of view must be kept up." (Swiss Association of Graduate Women)

Considering the urgent need for funding and implementation of Green Education methods so learners of all ages gain environmental intelligence, GWI appeals to States to:

1. Proactively collaborate with civil society organizations to develop and implement local strategies to equip learners of all ages with the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve a sustainable environment, thereby cultivating a generation capable of addressing climate challenges with resilience and innovation with healthy outcomes.
2. Prioritize disseminating resources to enhance public understanding of sustainable development and the disproportionate impact of climate change on women and girls. This accelerates informed decision-making and mobilizes support for Green Education initiatives.
3. Ensure the provision of appropriate Artificial Intelligence, climate and gender-sensitive coaching and training to educators and coaches to ensure that educational environments are inclusive, responsive to gender dynamics, and effectively address the impacts of climate change on learning outcomes.
4. Allocate sufficient funding to guarantee quality learning conditions and accessibility for all students, prioritizing support for women and girls who are vulnerable without such provision. This commitment advances the goals of Green Education and sustainable development, ensuring equitable access to education infrastructure.
5. Develop and integrate a gender perspective into national and local education strategies that addresses climate initiatives thereby creating a roadmap of accountability to address the specific challenges faced by women and girls in the context of climate change.

To conclude GWI offers youthful insights about Green Education from youthful contributors to its International Day of Education publication, “It’s crucial for States, non-governmental organizations, civil society, and academia to support teachers and policy makers by integrating climate education into curricula and teacher training thereby training younger generations how to contribute to solutions in daily contexts of their lives and for the world’s future.”

“There is a generational gap arising more and more, making teacher education crucial. An emphasis should be put on positive news (especially in the context of the climate to avoid this ‘eco-anxiety’) as that is more inspiring rather than demoralizing, and is a perspective that teachers, as authoritative figures, should help bring to the table in these discussions.”

[1] United Nations SDGs <https://sdgs.un.org/>

[2] UNESCO <https://www.unesco.org/en/sustainable-developmen/education/greening-future>

[3] “Global movement for green education”, EarthDay.org website: <https://www.earthday.org/global-movement-for-green-education/>

[4] GWI, Human Rights Council 48th session written statement, page 1

[5] Kevin Macdonald, Harry A. Patrinos, “Investment in education quality is needed to enable green technological innovation and adaptation”, World Bank Blogs, 16 November 2021.

[6] Ibid,

[7] UNDP, 2023, Three reasons climate change education is critical for adaptation and resilience <https://www.undp.org/blog/three-reasons-climate-change-education-critical-adaptation-and-resilience>

[8] GWI Policy Resolutions <https://graduatewomen.org/members-login/constitutional-material/resolutions/>

[9] United Nations <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/412/79/PDF/N1841279.pdf?OpenElement>

[10] GWI International Day of Education: Green Education Discussion, <https://graduatewomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Sized-Education-Day-2024-GWI-Discussion-Network-2.pdf>