

Agreed conclusions on access and participation of women and girls in education, training and science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work

1. The following agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission are transmitted to the Economic and Social Council, in accordance with its resolution 2008/29 of 24 July 2008, as an input into the annual ministerial review of 2011.

Access and participation of women and girls in education, training and science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work*

1. The Commission on the Status of Women reaffirms the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and the declarations adopted by the Commission on the occasion of the tenth and fifteenth anniversaries of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

2. The Commission reiterates that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocols thereto, as well as other conventions and treaties, such as the relevant conventions of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the International Labour Organization, provide a legal framework and a comprehensive set of measures for the promotion of gender equality in education and employment.

3. The Commission recalls the United Nations Millennium Declaration and General Assembly resolution 65/1 of 22 September 2010, and recognizes the interdependence of all the Millennium Development Goals. The Commission also recalls the ministerial declaration of the 2010 high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council on implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women. It takes note of the Budapest Science Agenda — Framework for Action, adopted at the World Conference on Science in 1999, and of the Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All, adopted at the World Education Forum in 2000.

4. The Commission welcomes the establishment of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and its operationalization, which will strengthen the ability of the United Nations to support the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women, and welcomes the appointment of Michelle Bachelet as the first Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-

* For the discussion, see chap. II, paras. 75-78.

Women.

5. The Commission acknowledges the important role of national machineries for the advancement of women, which should be placed at the highest possible level of government, the relevant contribution of national human rights institutions where they exist, and the important role of civil society, especially women's organizations, in advancing the implementation of the

11. The Commission recognizes that research and development

18. The Commission also expresses concern that inadequate educational opportunities and low quality education reduce the benefits of education and training for women and girls, men and boys, and that women's educational gains are yet to translate into equal access to full employment and decent work, with consequent long-term adverse effects on the development of any society. It remains deeply concerned by the persistence of high female illiteracy rates and gender stereotyped roles of women and men, which inhibit women's equal participation in employment, leading to occupational segregation, including the widespread underrepresentation of women and girls in many fields of science and technology, which represents a loss of talent and perspectives, hinders economic development and women's economic empowerment and can contribute to the gender pay gap.

19. The Commission expresses concern about high drop-out rates from school of female students in many parts of the world, especially at the secondary level, and including at the tertiary level, owing to multiple discrimination and factors that impede girls' participation in education.

20. The Commission expresses concern that the unequal sharing of responsibilities of daily life, including caregiving between women and men, girls and boys, has a disproportionate impact on women's and girls' access to education, training and science and technology, and on their economic empowerment and long-term economic security.

21. The Commission underlines that addressing the barriers to equal access of women and girls to education, training and science and technology requires a systematic, comprehensive, integrated, sustainable, multidisciplinary and multisectoral approach, including policy, legislative and programmatic interventions and, as appropriate, gender-responsive budgeting, at all levels.

22. The Commission urges Governments, at all levels, including local authorities and national machineries for the advancement of women, and/or, as appropriate, the relevant entities of the United Nations system and international and regional organizations, within their respective mandates and bearing in mind national priorities, and invites national human rights institutions where they exist, and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, academia, educational, scientific research and funding institutions, the private sector, employer organizations, trade unions, professional associations, the media and other relevant actors, to take the following actions, as appropriate:

Strengthening national legislation, policies and programmes

(a) Mainstream a gender perspective in legislation, policies and programmes within all governmental sectors, including education, training, science and technology, academia, research institutions and research funding agencies, in order to

address unequal access and participation of women and girls in education, training and science and technology, including for the

development assistance is used effectively to help meet development goals and targets and help them, inter alia, to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women;

(i) Strengthen international cooperation in the area of access and participation of women and girls in education,

(n) Improve and expand women's and girl's access to distance education, e-learning, tele-education and community radio, including in rural and remote communities, owing to the important role they play in women's development, including, inter alia, in helping to overcome issues related to time constraints, lack of accessibility, lack of financial resources and family responsibilities;

(o) Increase enrolment and retention rates of girls in education, inter alia, by: allocating appropriate and adequate budgetary resources; enlisting the support of parents and the community, including through campaigns and flexible school schedules; providing financial and other incentives targeted at families, including access to free education at the primary level, and at other levels where possible, and scholarships; and providing teaching, learning and hygiene and health supplies, as well as nutritional and academic support, in order to minimize the costs of education, in particular to families, and to facilitate parents' ability to choose education for their children;

(p) Ensure that pregnant adolescents and young mothers, as well as single mothers, can continue and complete their education, and in this regard, design, implement and, where applicable, revise educational policies to allow them to return to school, providing them with access to health and social services and support, including childcare facilities and crèches, and to education programmes with accessible locations, flexible schedules and distance education, including e-learning, and bearing in mind the challenges faced by young fathers in this regard;

(q) Condemn all forms of violence against women and girls and take appropriate action to strengthen and implement legal, policy, administrative and other measures to prevent and eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence in order, inter alia, to ensure access and participation in education, training, full employment and decent work;

(r) Improve the safety of girls at and on the way to school, including, inter alia, by improving infrastructure such as transportation, providing separate and adequate sanitation facilities, improved lighting, playgrounds and safe environments, conducting violence prevention activities in schools and communities and establishing and enforcing penalties for all forms of harassment and violence against girls;

Strengthening gender-sensitive quality education and training, including in the field of science and technology

(s) Improve the quality of education at all levels for both girls and boys, including in science and technology education, through improving learning conditions, continuous teacher training, teaching methodologies and curriculum development, implementing programmes to improve achievements for the most disadvantaged learners and expanding recruitment and

support for teachers, in particular for women teachers in scientific and technological disciplines;

(t) Ensure that education results in the acquisition by women and girls of literacy and numeracy skills, knowledge and other skills that enhance and broaden their employment opportunities;

(u) Expand and improve teacher education and training and systematically integrate a gender perspective in such programmes in order to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls and to overcome gender stereotypes;

(v) Develop gender-sensitive curricula for educational programmes at all levels and take concrete measures to ensure that educational materials portray women and men, youth, girls and boys in positive and non-stereotypical roles, particularly in the teaching of scientific and technological subjects, in order to address the root causes of segregation in working life;

(w) Remove legal, regulatory and social barriers, where appropriate, to sexual and reproductive health education within formal education programmes on women's health issues;

(x) Ensure women's and girls' right to education at all levels as well as access to life skills and sex education based on full and accurate information and, with respect to girls and boys, in a manner consistent with their evolving capacities, and with appropriate direction and guidance from parents and legal guardians, in order to help women and girls, men and boys, to develop knowledge to enable them to make informed and responsible decisions to reduce early childbearing and maternal mortality, to promote access to pre- and post-natal care and to combat sexual harassment and gender-based violence;

(y) Take steps to promote access for women and girls to education and training, including human rights education and learning at all levels, which can foster tolerance and mutual understanding and respect for all human rights, so that they can realize their full human potential by learning about the comprehensive framework of all human rights and fundamental freedoms;

(z) Provide quality education in emergency situations that is gender-sensitive, centred on learners, rights-based, protective, adaptable, inclusive, participatory and reflective of the specific living conditions of women, children and youth, and that pays due regard, as appropriate, to their linguistic and cultural identity, mindful that quality education can foster tolerance and mutual understanding and respect for the human rights of others;

(aa) Improve hands-on experimentation and collaborative work in science and technology classes, highlight the broad societal applications of science and technology in curricula and educational material and expose girls and boys, women and men, to female role models in science and technology, in order to

make science and technology, including engineering and mathematics, more attractive for girls and women;

(bb) Promote a positive image of careers in science and technology for women and girls, including in the mass media and social media and through sensitizing parents, students, teachers, career counsellors and curriculum developers, and devising and scaling up other strategies to encourage and support their participation in these fields;

Supporting the transition from education to full employment and decent work

(cc) Address the different barriers women and girls face in the transition from school to work by: expanding the scope of education and training opportunities that are relevant to employment opportunities and aligned with rapidly changing labour market needs, particularly in emerging, new and non-traditional fields; helping women acquire business, trade, information and communications technology and entrepreneurship skills; raising awareness of such opportunities and of their suitability to both women and men, particularly among parents, teachers, career counsellors and other advisers; and encouraging interaction between educational systems, the private sector and civil society, as appropriate;

(dd) Adopt policies and mechanisms to recognize women's prior learning and management skills, including those gained from informal and/or unpaid work, especially for women who discontinued their education or employment for various reasons, so as to facilitate their access to education, training and employment opportunities;

(ee) Improve access to gender-sensitive career counselling and to job search support services and include job readiness and job search skills in curricula for secondary and higher education and vocational training, in order to facilitate the transition from school to work and re-entry into the labour market for women of all ages;

(ff) Work to eliminate occupational and sectoral segregation and the gender pay gap by recognizing the value of sectors that have large numbers of women workers, such as care

undertaking campaigns to sensitize public opinion and other relevant actors to these issues; and promoting measures that reconcile care and professional life and emphasize men's equal responsibilities with respect to household work;

(hh) Develop or strengthen policies and programmes to support the multiple roles of women in society, including in the fields of science and technology, in order to increase women's and girls' access to education, training, science and technology, while acknowledging the social significance of maternity and motherhood, parenting and the role of parents and other guardians in the upbringing of the children and caring for other family members, and ensure that such policies and programmes also promote shared responsibility of parents, women and men and society as a whole;

(ii) Encourage employers and research funding agencies to establish flexible and non-discriminatory work policies and arrangements for both women and men, such as time extension on research grants for pregnant researchers, leave schemes, quality care services and social protection policies, in order to improve the retention and progression of women in science and technology;

(jj) Implement gender-sensitive policies and programmes for women migrant workers and provide safe and legal channels that recognize their skills and education and fair labour conditions, facilitate their productive employment and decent work and integration into the labour force, including, inter alia, in the fields of education and science and technology, and ensure that all women, including care workers, are legally protected against violence and exploitation;

Increasing retention and progression of women in science and technology employment

(kk) Encourage workplace environments and institutional practices that value all members and offer them equal opportunities to reach their full potential, ensuring that gender equality and gender mainstreaming are considered a necessary dimension of human resources management, in particular for the modernization of scientific and technological organizations and institutions, both in the public and private sectors;

(ll) Encourage the use of clear and transparent criteria for, and promote the achievement of gender balance in, recruitment, promotion and recognition in science and technology, both in the public and private sectors; train and sensitize leadership and staff, at all levels, in gender mainstreaming and gender equality issues and prevent direct and indirect discrimination against women; and support the building of leadership skills for women;

(mm) Develop career advisory, networking and mentoring programmes, including programmes that utilize information and communications technology; support role models and facilitate programmes that link women scientists around the world; and

promote measures to improve female retention and progression in the fields of science and technology, with a special focus on women scientists in tertiary education and early-stage career and women re-entering science and technology careers;

(nn) Take steps to ensure that science, technology and innovation policies take into account and address the specific constraints faced by women entrepreneurs and facilitate their access to credit, training, information and business support

innovation policies and programmes, with a view to replicating and scaling up successes, and in this regard looks forward to any steps or actions that could be taken by the relevant United Nations bodies, especially the Commission on Science and Technology for Development.