



# Economic and Social Council

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## Commission on the Status of Women

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

### Statement submitted by China Association for Science and Technology, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

Women are an indispensable force for human development and social progress. Their educational level therefore carries implications not only for their own survival and development, but also the development of humanity. This is why countries of the world have all been making tremendous efforts to better educate and engage women in scientific and technological innovation. Here, remarkable success has been achieved by China, notably thanks to extensive, tailored policy support for gender equality in the field of science and technology.

The educational level of women has a lasting influence on social progress. The current development in China is closely linked with a growing number of outstanding female professionals in science and technology. The country's nine-year compulsory education system allows all citizens access to basic education, thus removing the fundamental obstacle to gender equality. The fact that in 2020 the ratio of female students in Chinese universities and colleges reached 52.04% speaks full volume about the size and success of the Chinese government's efforts in improving national educational level and gender equality. By embedding gender equality into admission and employment policies, China has achieved a 33.9% female share of professionals in science, technology and engineering. They have made remarkable contributions to the economic and social development in China. In addition, outstanding female researchers, the number of whom is increasing year by year, are becoming a major source of inspirations for the younger generation of women to strive for a more fulfilled life.

In order to achieve gender equality, it is important to recognize gender differences and provide tailored support for women. Differences with males and a special role in bearing and rearing a child mean that women are in need of greater and tailored support. Given that on average a child birth costs females at least 2-3 years, many research and talent projects in China have relaxed age limit for female applicants by 2-5 years compared with their male counterparts. This policy, along with a gender ratio requirement, helps facilitate the success of female researchers by securing for them a level playing field. In 2021, 51% of applicants for Young Scientists Fund of National Natural Science Foundation of China were females. In the same year, females accounted for 29% of applicants of the general programs of National Natural Science Foundation of China. In 2022, the figure rose to 38.2%. This goes to show that women in China have been greatly empowered to play an indispensable role in advancing science and technology.

However, despite the many efforts that have been made worldwide and some progress that has been achieved, gender equality remains elusive. Much of the potential of women regrettably remains locked. Every ounce of potential left untapped is a contribution that was never made. In recent years, women have won the Noble Prizes, but their share is still very low, and almost all of them are from developed countries. In fact, it is a common global phenomenon that the share of high-achieving women is far lower than that of men in any field. For example, the ratio of female professors in universities is much lower than male ones, and so is that of female leaders in major companies or organizations. When it comes to educational level of women, the gap between developed and developing countries is also big. In developed countries, women already have a substantial right to select the professional fields that fit their own interests. In a sharp contrast, many of their counterparts in developing countries are still struggling for primary education, still less making meaningful contributions to economic and scientific development of their countries.

We suggest that the United Nations make continuous efforts to improve access to education and career development opportunities for women in developing

countries. We call on developed countries to provide more funding and support that can make a real difference for women in developing countries. We believe that the international community, by focusing on the field of science and technology, will be in a strong position to deliver gender equality on other fronts too. To be more specific, we propose the following measures. First, the developing countries need to formulate gender equality policies and provide compulsory primary education for all girls. Second, a women's education scholarship should be created with funding from the developed countries to help the capable female students in developing countries to obtain higher education. Third, UN Women could also play a part in unlocking the benefits of next generation information technologies and digital economy to women by making available professional training opportunities on science and technology. It is expected that these measures can help generate a higher share of female professionals in science and research for developing countries, and contribute to their capacity building and competitiveness, enabling them to make more contributions to the economic development of the entire world.

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