

Statement of BPW International

Mister Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Business and Professional Women International is represented in 110 countries in 5 continents. One of its aims is education and life long learning of women and girls.

The world is not on track to achieve the SDG4 targets by 2030 or implement the Second Area of Concern of the Beijing Platform for Action (Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and training). Societal inequality shapes education inequality. Globally, there are 262 million children and youth out of school and a 617-million illiterate population. Women still represent two-thirds of the illiterate.

In low income countries, fewer than two thirds of girls complete primary education, and only one in three complete lower secondary school. Closely related to the lack of education is early marriage, migration and the lack of identity. Only a birth certificate gives children access to public schools.

The **Education 2030 Framework for Action** (FFA) states that **equity and inclusion** in and through education is the **cornerstone** of a transformative education agenda, addressing all forms of exclusion, marginalisation, disparities and inequalities to ensure that **no one is left behind**. Education has the potential to be an equalizer as long as girls and boys, youth and adults benefit from access to equitable and inclusive quality education for skills development to attain decent work for all (SDG8, BPfA#2). Bridging the **digital divide** and using the potential of **technology** can also improve equity.

Education plays a central role in empowering girls and women with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills and Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education necessary for today's labor market.

Recommendations:

1. Facilitate education by preventing child marriage and issuing free birth certificates for every child.
2. Assure by 2030, equal access for all girls to affordable and quality technical (including digital skills), vocational and liberal arts education, at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels (Target 4.3, SDG) so that girls and women have the skills and knowledge to secure decent work (including entrepreneurship) and a decent life. The provision of tertiary education should be made progressively free.
4. Provide lifelong learning opportunities for all women;
5. Examine the cultural and structural barriers that perpetuate gender gaps in Science, Technology and Innovation (STI), especially at an institutional level, in order to understand the complex trends in the continued under-representation of women in STEM.

Thank you for your attention!