

Esteemed delegates, distinguished panelists, and honorable attendees,

The crucial link between gender equality and sustainable development through STI requires **our immediate and constant focus**. Despite the undeniable importance of gender parity and the indispensable role of STI in realizing the 2030 Agenda, **current progress remains regrettably inadequate. Barriers persist** for women and girls in accessing education and employment opportunities in fields related (STI) **particularly in STEM fields**.

The numbers today serve as sobering reminders of the substantial challenges we're up against. Women occupy only **one in three research positions** worldwide and a mere **one in five STEM jobs**. Shockingly, a mere **15% of tech startup** founders are women, highlighting a glaring gender disparity in entrepreneurial endeavors. Furthermore, while there is a **modest rise in the number of women inventors**. Nevertheless, the representation of **women in international patent applications** remains disappointingly low at **17.7%**, highlighting ongoing gender disparities in innovation.

Women are still underrepresented in many STEM fields globally, but we have to be aware that this underrepresentation starts very often as early as in **primary education**, with fewer girls pursuing STEM subjects in school and **continues into the workforce**. There is a persistent **gender pay gap in STEM professions**, where women often earn less than their male counterparts for the same work. Women are also **underrepresented in leadership positions within STEM fields**. This lack of representation not only perpetuates gender inequality but also **limits the diversity of perspectives** in decision-making processes.

Let me share the statistics for women in education and science in **Serbia**, where we have encouraging data for achieving gender equality in STI. With **over 50% of female students** enrolled in faculties and universities, over **50% of Phds** in Serbia being women and **50% of faculty staff** being women, we surpass European and global norms. Additionally, in scientific institutions, over **60% of staff** are women, with high percentage of them being **group leaders and the directors of institutes** - a remarkably high percentage compared to European but also global standards. So it can be achieved.

We must redirect resources towards research and innovation initiatives that **prioritize gender equality** and empower women in STI fields. We must encourage girls to choose for themselves. Good example The **L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science Awards** celebrates and recognizes outstanding women researchers globally, highlighting their groundbreaking contributions to science and encouraging more women to pursue careers in STEM fields.

Addressing gender equality in STEM requires concerted **efforts from various stakeholders**, including governments, educational institutions, employers, and professional organizations but also from the society as a whole. It should be **collective decision**. **Strategies to promote gender equality** include implementing policies to address unconscious bias, providing support for women in STEM education and careers, promoting inclusive workplace cultures, and increasing visibility and representation of women in leadership positions. Additionally, **fostering mentorship and networking opportunities for women** in STEM can help support their professional development and advancement.

In this pursuit, Serbia remains steadfast in its commitment to advancing gender equality and harnessing the transformative potential of STI for sustainable development. **Our recent initiation of the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development 2024-2033 in the UN reflects our dedication to addressing these pressing issues on a global scale.** Through targeted investments, collaborative partnerships, and gender-responsive policies, we aspire to build a future where every individual, regardless of gender, has equal opportunities to contribute to and benefit from scientific progress and technological innovation.

In conclusion, I commend the exemplary initiatives showcased in this session and urge all stakeholders to redouble their efforts in advancing **women-centered STI solutions for sustainable development**. Let us seize this moment as an opportunity to catalyze transformative change that **women can provide** and propel humanity towards faster accomplishment of Sustainable Development goals. Thank you.