



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Message from Ms Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

**on the occasion of the first International Day of Women and Girls in
Science**

11 February 2016

The new *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* underlines the power of science as a driver for human rights and dignity, poverty eradication and the protection of the planet.

On this first *International Day of Women and Girls in Science*, UNESCO's message is clear – the new Agenda will not meet its promise without investing in women's and girls' empowerment through and in science.

More than ever today, the world needs science and science needs women.

Almost 21 years after the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* from the 4th World Conference on Women, women remain underrepresented in the natural sciences. According to the most recent *UNESCO Science Report*, women account for only 28 percent of researchers across the world, with the gap deepening at the higher echelons of decision-making. Women have less access to funding, to networks, to senior positions, which puts them at a further disadvantage in high-impact science publishing.

This calls for deep and sustained change, starting in the earliest years through improved participation of women and girls in science education, training and research activities at all levels. Girls' and women's access to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) cannot be envisaged when girls and women remain the majority of out-of-school children, youth and illiterate adults. This gap throws a shadow over entire societies, as no country can move forward with only half its creativity, energy, and dreams.

Gender equality is a global priority at UNESCO, and promoting women and girls in science stands at the heart of this action, through a range of initiatives – starting with the flagship *L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science* partnership, and including the *Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World*, the Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education, with a focus on STEM education, the SAGA (STEM and Gender Advancement) project, as well as the UNESCO *UNITWIN Networks in Gender, Science and Technology*, supporting women in science teaching and research.

On this first *International Day of Women and Girls in Science*, I invite all our partners and all Governments to redouble efforts to empower girls and women through and in science, as a foundation to take forward the 2030 Agenda.

Irina Bokova