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# GENDER WIRE

## 8th Edition (Apr-Jun, 2017)

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### HIGHLIGHTS

- **High-level meeting on the importance of girls' education for peaceful and sustainable societies (Baku, Azerbaijan - 6 May):** The [event](#), co-hosted by Ms Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, and Mr Mikayil Jabbarov, Minister of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, took place within the framework of the [Fourth World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue](#) and concluded with the launch of the Global Humanitarian Call to Invest in Girls' Education, taken up by all the participants.



- **Third Biennial International Conference on Women in Science, Technology and Innovation (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia - 15-16 May):** Saniye Gülser Corat, Director of the Division for Gender Equality of UNESCO, represented the Director-General of UNESCO at the [event](#) under the theme "Innovative Solutions by Women for UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2016-2030". S. G. Corat gave a keynote address in the opening session where she presented UNESCO's main initiatives promoting women and girls in STEM fields, laid out the main challenges that prevail and highlighted the key factors that need to be addressed in order to bridge the gender gap.



- **Smart Africa Women's Summit (Kigali, Rwanda - 12 May):** Ms Irina Bokova participated in the third edition of Transform Africa 2017 (TAS2017) entitled 'Smart Cities, Fast Forward' aimed to provide a platform to discuss and leverage capacity at building knowledge-based societies in Africa through ICT. Organized within its framework was the Smart Africa Women's Summit, where Mme Corat represented UNESCO. The main goal was to draw the road map to ensure the inclusion of women and girls in the digital transformation of Africa. The day concluded with the endorsement of the Kigali Africa Smart Women and Girls Declaration, taken up by all participants.
- **STEM Gender Equality Congress (Berlin, Germany - 8-9 June):** The [Congress'](#) main objective was to bring together leading researchers, policy makers, NGOs, the private sector, academia and government representatives to share knowledge, promote collaboration and create a global dialogue. Ms Corat represented UNESCO's Director-General at the congress and gave the keynote address where she presented UNESCO's work in STEAM.
- **Sub-Forum of World Women University Presidents' Forum (WWUPF) (Bucharest, Rumania - 1-2 June):** Under the general theme "Adaptability and Breakthrough: University's Reform and Innovation in the New Ecology of Higher Education" the event was organized in three sub-topics (1) challenges and opportunities for universities in new ecology; (2) Innovation on education and

teaching in the era of internet; and (3) Universities and women rectors' roles and mission in new ecology. Ms Corat represented UNESCO and gave the keynote address.

- **UNESCO's Soft Power Today: Fostering Women's Empowerment and Leadership (UNESCO HQ – 30 June):** UNESCO inaugurated in Paris the first of a series of thematic events on UNESCO's Soft Power with a [high-level conference](#) titled: "UNESCO's Soft Power Today: Fostering Women's Empowerment and Leadership." First of its kind, this High-level Conference where over [50 high-level personalities](#) took the floor in front of an audience of 400 participants, engaged leaders and change-makers from different sectors and backgrounds to contribute their visions and perspectives to UNESCO's reflections to contribute to the sustainable development agenda and particularly to women's empowerment and leadership.

## UNESCO's Gender Equality Champions



*Simone Veil during the National Assembly debates on the abortion law in 1974*

There are perhaps very few women in French history who are as revered and respected as Simone Veil. In recognition of her life-long contributions to women's rights, the eighth edition of UNESCO's Gender Wire acknowledges **Simone Veil**, Holocaust survivor and French politician, as this month's gender equality champion. A lawyer and politician by profession, Simone Veil started her career at the Ministry of Justice and worked to improve French women's rights and status including women's prison conditions and the treatment of incarcerated women. Later, as the Minister of Health, she pushed for the historic 1974 French law legalizing

abortion despite immense opposition. The legislation, famously known as the *Loi Veil* (Veil Law), is considered a cornerstone of women's rights and secularism in France. She was also passionate about a unified Europe and its significance for peacebuilding and worked for the European Economic Community — which later became the European Union. In 1979, she became the first elected president of the European parliament. Later in life, as a Holocaust survivor, she led the movement for Holocaust memorialization, serving on the Foundation for the Memory of the Shoah (Holocaust) for seven years. She died on 30 June 2017, at the age of 89. French President Emmanuel Macron ensured her legacy be remembered among the greats of France by announcing that she would rest at the *Panthéon*, alongside her husband, becoming the fifth woman to be buried there.

## In the news!

### UNESCO's Soft Power Today:

### Fostering Women's Empowerment and Leadership



UNESCO inaugurated in Paris the first of a series of thematic events on UNESCO's Soft Power with a [high-level conference](#) entitled *UNESCO's Soft Power Today: Fostering Women's Empowerment and Leadership*. First of its kind, this High-level Conference where over [50 high-level personalities](#) took the floor in front of an audience of 400 participants, engaged leaders and change-makers from different sectors and backgrounds to contribute their visions and perspectives to UNESCO's reflections to contribute to the

sustainable development agenda and particularly to women's empowerment and leadership.

The high-level conference also featured parallel sessions on the main themes related to women's empowerment: education, peace and security, women's leadership in the private and public sectors, and the importance of breaking gender stereotypes. In these parallel sessions, the participants presented the state of the art through their experiences and work, discussed the challenges and innovative solutions towards the 2030 horizon and provided recommendations on UNESCO's role in promoting Gender Equality in the years to come.

In her closing remarks, Ms Bokova stated: "Sustainable development is not an abstract concept: it is a very concrete reality, with the face of a girl who is now 12 years old, who lives and learns safely, who is respected in school and in her family, and who is not forced to marry or work. If these conditions are met for this girl, tomorrow we will have sustainable development. UNESCO can act, and UNESCO must act to give her the rights, training and skills to become whatever she desires."

This conference was also the opportunity to read a [statement](#) on UNESCO's Promise Gender Equality. Building on its wealth of experience and using its Soft Power, UNESCO is determined to scale up existing initiatives and good practices that have been successfully implemented in the course of the last decade; while at the same time identify new areas, new approaches and new modalities that have the potential to deliver substantial results in the field of women's empowerment in the years to come.

If you would like to see pictures of the event, please click here: [Opening](#) & [Closing](#)

## *Let's Mainstream!*

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### **Global Women Leaders' Forum**

World-renowned women leaders from around the globe gathered for the [Global Women Leaders Forum](#) (GWLF) in May 2016. This forum, organized by UNESCO, in collaboration with the Council of Women in Business in Bulgaria (CWBB), hosted heads of states as well as global high-level speakers from business, government, academia and international organizations. This June 2017, the Division for Gender Equality of UNESCO published a report based on the discussions and findings of the Forum. Participants came together to learn from each other and best practices, to identify measures that contribute to women's empowerment and leadership and to identify the challenges that still lie ahead.

The report summarises the best practices highlighted during the Forum, whilst taking stock of the challenges that still lie ahead in each of the thematic areas explored:

1. Women in Politics and Government
2. Women and Business
3. Education and Training for Future Women Leaders
4. Trends in Science, Technology and Innovation
5. Women, ICTs and the Media
6. Women, Peace, Security and Development

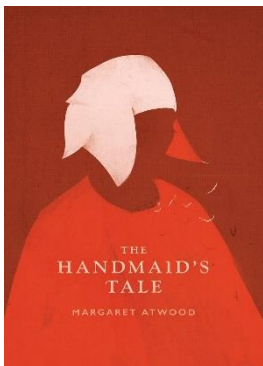
The report concludes with the full text of the **Sofia Declaration for Women's Leadership and Gender Equality**. The Sofia declaration confirms the commitment of the conference delegates to promote women's leadership and to take action to overcome the obstacles to women's personal and professional development. In particular, it highlights the role played by education as the cornerstone of the empowerment of women and girls.

If you want to know more about the GWLF, see the report [here](#).

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## *Gender Wire's Selection*

### **Books – The Handmaid's Tale**



“The Handmaid's Tale” by Canadian author Margaret Atwood is a dystopian novel set in Gilead, a country governed by a theocratic and patriarchal totalitarian state that not only suppresses women but defines and governs them solely by their gender roles as wives, childbearers, and household help. The novel explores themes of women subjugation and women's bodies as political instruments. Considered a classic in feminist fiction, this 1985 novel is receiving a new wave of attention due to the TV adaptation by MGM and Hulu, becoming the number one bestseller once again. Although published more than 30 years ago, many critics argue it is shockingly relevant to today's society.

# ?!?! Did You Know ?!?!

## CANARY GIRLS OF WORLD WAR I



While men were fighting on the battlefields of World War I, thousands of women were answering the government's cry for help by joining the war effort as well. Of these women a lesser told story is the one of UK's female munition workers who were known as the "**Canary Girls**" for the lurid shade of yellow that stained their skin and hair.

These women worked with hazardous chemicals, trinitrotoluene (TNT) among many, on a daily basis without adequate protection. The toxic fumes made many of them ill with nausea and skin irritations and sapped their

energy. In addition to the precarious factory conditions, the women faced constant danger from explosions that were a common occurrence, including fatal blasts.

By the end of the war, about a million female workers are known to have worked in munitions factories nationwide. Despite their immense contribution in ensuring adequate ammunition for the soldiers during the war, their efforts have often been over looked, not much being acknowledged nor written about after the war. A new campaign is being led by BBC Hereford and Worcester in hopes to honor these working class women who risked life and limb to supply ammunition to the frontline.