

Title: Gender Equity for Global Sustainability - The Role of Women and Girls in Science to Meet the Challenges of the 17 SDGs

While there have been improvements in access to education for young women worldwide, there remains a marked deficit with respect to their engagement in scientific disciplines. Many of these disciplines are central to the advancement of global sustainability, and all intellectual resources are needed to confront these immense challenges. Today women account for only 30% of the world's researchers, with even smaller percentages holding senior positions. A study in the U.S. indicated that women are 45 percent more likely than men to leave the science and technology jobs within a year. Challenges for women are not only a function of available educational opportunities. Additional impediments are as basic as lack of encouragement, absence of role models, and consistent bias against women in these disciplines. Obstacles in the classroom persist in the workplace with detrimental consequences for women and for global progress more broadly. Science literacy and knowledge of the scientific process are assets in life well beyond careers. Engagement in science topics can be a strong factor in social inclusion more broadly, and girls share the same curiosities and creativity as their male counterparts.

The Association of Science-Technology Centers ([ASTC](#)), representing the world's science centers and museums; the International Council for Science ([ICSU](#)); and the UN Major Group for Children and Youth ([MGCY](#)) are bringing global attention to the role that women and girls can play in support of science for global sustainability.

ICSU says explicitly in its statutes that it “promotes equitable opportunities for access to science and its benefits, and opposes discrimination based on such factors as ethnic origin, religion, citizenship, language, political or other opinion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or age.” The commitments have resulted in collaborations such as the **Gender in science, innovation, technology and engineering** (GenderInSITE) initiative to promote the role of women in these fields and expand the their roles in the human capital needed to advance SITE for development.

These priorities are shared by ASTC institutions worldwide, with their focus on informal science learning that places particular importance on fostering supportive, stereotype-free learning environments to build girls' interest and confidence in SITE. In partnership with UNESCO, ICSU, and others, ASTC's global network of science centers and museums raises awareness and broadens access for girls in science, translating gender and diversity research into practice. These public institutions help girls develop skills and help counteract an all-to-common misconception that science and math are more appropriate for boys than girls.

The MGCY has also been particularly active on this topic with the launch of its Youth Science Policy Interface and efforts to highlight the roles of young women scientists of all disciplines in support of global sustainability.

Speakers:

Welcoming and opening remarks:

Mr. Guy Labine, Chair Elect of the ASTC Board

Round Table moderator: **Donovan Guttieres**, MGCY)

Representing ICSU, **Dr. Miyoko O. Watanabe**, Deputy Executive Director at the Japan Science and Technology Agency ([JST](#)). She is also the agency's Director of the Office for Diversity and Inclusion and Director-General of the Center for Science Communication.

Representing MGCY, **Maria Bilal** (Pakistan/Australia) from G(irls)20, a Canada-based, globally active social enterprise that cultivates a new generation of female leaders through education, entrepreneurial training, leadership, and global experiences—with one ultimate goal: increasing female labor force participation around the world

Representing the scientific community, **Prof. Mandë Holford**, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, Hunter College and CUNY Graduate Center and Research Associate, Sackler Institute for Comparative Genomics Invertebrate Zoology, American Museum of Natural History

Representing ASTC: **Dorothy Bennett**, Director of Creative Pedagogy, New York Hall of Science

Daria E. Cirnatiu, Finalist of the Canadian World Biotech Tour Stop (project is about the use of biotechnology to clean the St. Laurent river in Montreal).

Closing remarks **Gillian Thomas**, Interim President and CEO, ASTC