



**On July 12 2017, UNESCO joined with UN Women and the World Intellectual Policy Organization (WIPO), in co-sponsorship with the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Rwanda, to host a side event entitled “Science – Technology – Innovation: Closing the gender gap to meet the SDGs” in the margins of the High-Level Political Forum at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.**

Introducing the UNESCO, UN Women and WIPO joint initiative “Science – Innovation – Entrepreneurship: Closing the Gender Gap to Meet the SDGs”, the event explored pathways to promote the participation of women and girls in science, technology and innovation (STI) sectors and industries.

The event moderator, Lucinda Longcroft, Head of the WIPO New York Coordination Office, guided a multi-stakeholder panel with perspectives from experts and practitioners in academia, the private sector, UN agencies and Member States in an effort to cultivate multidimensional solutions.

Representing a leading country in the field was Urujeni Bakuramutsa, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Rwanda to the UN in New York. Addressing importance of education, Ms. Bakuramutsa highlighted the need intervene at different scales to build capacity and encourage women and girls’ participation and interest in STI fields. She also emphasized the potential economic growth and increased social mobility that could be achieved through investments in STI and advancement of the rights of girls and women.

The keynote speaker, Shirin Elahi, Managing Director of Scenarios Architecture of London, addressed how a ‘future foresight’ methodology can help policymakers prepare for uncertainty as they seek to close the gender gap in STI. Providing practical examples from the UN system and the private sector, she demonstrated how the technique has been used

by companies, governments and organizations to plan strategically and actively shape instead of react to the future.

John Paul Farmer, Director of Microsoft's New York Technology and Civic Innovation Team, underlined the necessity for a multilateral approach, involving actors in the private and public sectors and society as a whole, to facilitate the necessary cultural and educational shift that will encourage females in STI. Supported by studies that prove that diverse teams perform better, Mr. Farmer further discussed the competitive benefits of gender equity.

Pamela McCauley, the Professor and Director of the Department of Industrial Engineering and Management Systems at the University of Central Florida, emphasized the need to address the barriers that cause women to drop out of STI careers at an alarming rate compared to their male colleagues. Ms. McCauley illustrated a clear plan to retain and advance women who are already in these fields, including introducing policies to promote work-life balance, cultivating a deeper understanding of barriers, providing role models and offering unconscious bias training to people of all genders.

Marie Paule Roudil, Director of the UNESCO Liaison Office in New York, described how the joint initiative seeks to leverage the different agencies' strengths and expertise to address the gender gap at various stages in the "STI cycle" of education - R&D - employment/entrepreneurship - leadership and policy. Applying a multi-step approach to identify pragmatic strategies and tools for policymakers, the initiative commenced with an expert group meeting in March 2017, which used future foresight methodology to explore pathways to preferred outcomes for women and girls in STI in the year 2030.

Anna Fälth, Manager of the UN Women's Empower Women, presented the preliminary key insights derived from the series of expert meetings and public discussions held as part of the initiative. With an open invitation for the audience to engage, she introduced the next steps of the initiative, which includes mapping of related work in the UN system and establishing an interactive platform to connect and catalyze cooperation between different initiatives and networks.