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**Population and sustainable development, in particular
sustained and inclusive economic growth**

Statement submitted by Women’s Health and Education Center (WHEC), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council¹

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

¹ The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Making science and technology work better for inclusive economic growth

Digital technology does not exist in a vacuum – it has enormous potential for positive change but can also reinforce and magnify existing fault lines and worsen economic and other inequities as exemplified by the current pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the importance of science, technology and innovation for humans' well-being and survival, as well as a need for greater global cooperation. Harnessing the full potential of science and technology for the sustained and inclusive economic growth for people everywhere, is the focus of the Women's Health and Education Center's (WHEC) (Learning, Innovating, Networking for Knowledge) Access Project, available at <http://www.womenshealthsection.com/content/documents/LINK-Access-Project.pdf>.

This project aims to identify gaps and promote partnerships in an effort to achieve a brighter and healthier world by 2030. It is essential that we work together – across borders, sectors and disciplines – to make science and technology work for everyone.

The WHEC, now in its third decade, along with its partners, UN agencies and the online platforms in health and education, which support countries in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, invites UN Member States to look for various forms of collaborations. Through advocacy on the frontline, we share information, experiences, best practices and policy advice with 227 countries and territories in the six official languages of the United Nations.

In the age of digital interdependence, the following five sets of recommendations from WHEC, on how the international community could best work together to optimize the use of digital technologies and mitigate the risks, are:

1. Build an inclusive digital economy and society;
2. Develop human and institutional capacity;
3. Protect human rights and human agency;
4. Promote digital trust, security and stability;
5. Foster global digital cooperation.

WHEC in collaboration with UNESCO, World Health Organization (WHO), and WHO Academy are planning to create educational programs for schools in low- and middle-income countries in conjunction with developed countries, such as the USA, to improve and develop proficiencies in school systems in languages and STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine), available at http://www.womenshealthsection.com/content/documents/007_1900_RLuthra_8_04_21.pdf.

Supporting girls, women and minorities in science and technology. Despite progress in the creation of opportunities for girls, women and minorities in STEMM fields; this segment of the population continues to be systematically underrepresented as users and leaders in these domains. To achieve the sustainable development goals, we need to ensure a full and equal access and participation of girls, women and minorities in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine (STEMM). Our world needs science, and science needs girls, women and minorities.

To support and develop health promoting schools. If we consider what it takes to create health, the school becomes an ideal setting for action. These so-called life skills include decision-making, problem-solving, critical-thinking, communication, self-assessment and coping strategies. People with such skills are more likely to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Each new generation of children faces health challenges, but those

being dealt with by today's youth seem particularly daunting. Children at an early age are confronted by situations that require decision-making skills for preventive action.

Preventing teen pregnancies and unwanted pregnancies. Unwanted and teen pregnancies are challenging issues for both developed and developing countries. Risks in every pregnancy and childbirth exist and depend on how many times a woman gets pregnant. From a health and social point of view, an unwanted or unplanned pregnancy usually occurs at the worst possible time representing a higher risk for mother and child. Information about abstinence, contraception counselling and contraception availability is essential for this at-risk group.

Information and management of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Adolescents find themselves under strong peer pressure to engage in highly risky behaviour which can have serious implications in their lives. The spreading of HIV/AIDS among adolescents is a more recent but growing phenomenon, while the problem of STDs continues to increase. We provide information on the most important concepts in the area of reproductive and sexual health, which includes respect for others, especially the opposite sex; self-esteem; the option of family planning and understanding that children are preferably born of a conscious decision by loving and responsible parents; the importance of postponing the first pregnancy; and the ability to resist peer pressure.

Promoting access to mental health services and information. The extent of mental health problems among children and adults alike, the "how to" of life is often a rather weak component of human skills. Education in life-skills enables children to protect and promote their own health and well-being by teaching them methods to be proactive in learning and practice these skills rather than just acquiring the knowledge. When schools promote health, a major improvement is anticipated in the mental health of children and the adults that they will become. Mental health should lose its negative connotation so the real significance of mental well-being for human societies is acknowledged.

Promoting newborn care. The vast majority of newborn deaths take place in developing countries where access to quality healthcare is low. Most of these newborns die at home without the appropriate care that could increase their chance of survival significantly. Our Newborn Care Section, available at <http://www.womenshealthsection.com/content/obsnc/> is very popular among healthcare providers at all levels. The purpose of this section is to provide evidence-based solutions to prevent newborn deaths and stillbirths. It sets out a path to accelerate sustainable development and to achieve its goals by 2030 with specific global and national milestones. We hope it provides a road map of strategic actions for ending poverty, preventable newborn mortality and stillbirth, and contributes to reducing maternal mortality and morbidity.

Join the initiatives.

We welcome everyone!