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Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all
at all ages

Statement submitted by Women's Health and Education Center, 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

Improving the health of our children and future generations through education

Health is equally fundamental to education. Education and health have power to transform the lives of our children and future generations, eliminating poverty, hunger and improving living conditions. Inclusive and transformative education and health cannot be delivered if our children are not safe, well-nourished and healthy, and free from violence and discrimination. There is growing numbers of studies that reflect the inter-relationships between education and health, which necessitates a more comprehensive approach to school health and coordinated action across sectors. Education strongly impacts health outcomes (such as health behaviors and use of preventive services) and determinants of health, such as risk contexts. Health-promoting schools that are safe and inclusive for all children and young people are essential for effective learning.

Education helps to reduce inequality. It also empowers people everywhere. In addition to free primary and secondary education for all boys and girls by 2030, the aim is to provide equal access to affordable vocational training, eliminate gender and wealth disparities, and achieve universal access to higher education. When people are able to get quality education they can break from the cycle of poverty. Low levels of information and communications technology (ICT) skills are also a major barrier to achieving universal and meaningful connectivity.

It is estimated that by 2030, there will be nearly 350 million people working to improve public health globally. (Source: WHO). The swift pace of scientific research, discovery and advancement will require the health workforce to stay abreast of the latest evidence-based guidelines and to feel confident putting them into practice. Courses developed by the Women's Health and Education Center on this global platform <http://www.WomensHealthSection.com> adheres to rigorous quality standards. This project/program is accessible in 227 countries and territories, as it is available in six official languages of the UN.

Groups that have difficulty to access education

Women, girls, migrants and minorities have difficulty to access education. About 40 per cent of countries have not achieved gender parity in primary education. These disadvantages in education also translate into lack of access to skills and limited opportunities in the labor market for young women, minorities and migrants. Seventy-nine low-and middle-income countries still face an average annual financial gap of \$79 billion necessary to fund the essential programs and achieve the UN's 2030 Agenda. Without additional measures, only one in six countries will achieve the universal secondary school completion target by 2030, an estimated 84 million children and young people will still be out of school, and approximately 300 million students will lack the basic numeracy and literacy skills necessary for success in life. (the SDG Report, 2023).

Inequalities will also worsen unless the digital divide – the gap between under-connected and highly digitalized countries – is not addressed. Sub-Saharan Africa faces the biggest challenges in providing schools with basic resources. The situation is extreme at the primary and lower secondary levels, where less than one-half of schools in sub-Saharan Africa have access to drinking water, electricity, computers and the Internet.

Women's Health and Education Center (WHEC) was established in 2001, to undertake the projects and program with the UN, WHO and UNESCO, to improve education and health needs in collaboration with both developed and developing

countries. The WHEC Chair Program *for* Research and Educational Organizations/Networks, was launched in 2022, in collaboration with the UNESCO and Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI), to improve sustainability literacy for all, with special focus on women, girls, minorities and migrants. It is fostering collaborative research partnerships/networks in both developed and developing countries.

Knowledge generation and dissemination

In view of the scale of today's global challenges and the great potential of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) to deliver responses, global cooperation in STI is indispensable to achieve health- and education-for-all. Global partnerships around STI are necessary to mobilize financial and knowledge resources from governments, businesses, academia and civil societies and unfold the potential of all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Both public and private sectors play an essential role in financing research and development, and therefore both are essential to create a balanced strategy, that leverages the strengths and weaknesses of both. Capacity building is essential to ensure equal participation. Partnerships are key to creating an open, fair and trusting environment, and ensuring equitable worldwide development of STI infrastructure, multisectoral approaches, including citizen science and indigenous knowledge.

Robust digital infrastructure, including interoperable systems, is essential for bridging the digital divide and enabling interconnectivity for inclusive global participation in STI and health development. International support and public-private partnerships for infrastructure development are key to enhancing access to stable and affordable electricity, mobile networks and the Internet. Sexual and reproductive health is critical to health and wellbeing across the life course, and therefore has to be embedded and integrated with universal health care and universal access to all. [Science and Knowledge Translation](#) in reproductive health research and dissemination, exchange and [clinical application of scientific knowledge](#) with the healthcare providers worldwide and communities, is the purpose of [WHEC's LINK Access Project](#).

Innovation in education

Women's Health and Education Center collects and disseminates progress, good-practices, innovations and research to support open educational resources and its implications with the support of UNESCO and international open education communities. We aim to develop strategies to monitor the educational effectiveness of long-term financial efficiency of open educational resources, which include participation of all relevant stakeholders. Such strategies could focus on improving learning processes and strengthening the connections between findings, decision-making, transparency, and accountability, for inclusive and equitable quality education and research.

When we work together – across national borders, across groups, disciples and stakeholder groups – we as humanity can harness science and technology to the benefits for all of us. We need to look at and appreciate the benefits of long-term commitment to fundamental research, but we also need to look ahead and anticipate challenges and possibilities. What is urgently needed is to enhance international solidarity and cooperation, revitalize global trust and partnerships in STI research and development.

Share knowledge through new partnerships

While scientific evidence is key in addressing complex global challenges, science is not a cure-all. Technological advancements can improve living conditions, but they have also often increased inequalities in certain instances, leading to increased frustration among those left behind. The scientific community needs to communicate their work, and inherent uncertainty of the scientific process, more effectively.

STI has immense potential for advancing the SDGs. Demonstrating the positive impacts of STI on people's lives, especially those most vulnerable, can boost trust. However, this trust must be earned. People need to see that technological solutions and innovations are beneficial, regulated, and accountable. At present, this is not the case in many sectors. The multilateral system can set regulatory frameworks, such as in the digital sphere, but active participation from all stakeholders is needed for developing international cybersecurity standards, artificial intelligence (AI) regulations, and data governance.

Our recommendations:

1. Governments should place education and health as a priority in both policy and practice.
2. Governments should make firm commitment to provide free primary and secondary school education to all, including vulnerable or marginalized groups.
3. Developing countries should formulate strategic plan for STI with clear, specific and measurable goals to seize the opportunities brought by technological advancement. The planning should reflect country's strengths and weaknesses in science, technology and innovation and highlight the connections (and missing links) between the national needs and objectives and the UN 2030 Agenda – Building inclusive STI global agenda.
4. One-UN Program on Digitalization and Sustainability for Health and Education Programs – to support developing countries, with special focus on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). An institutional home in the form of a One-UN Joint Program – that fully builds on existing UN System work with expertise – could give important impetus to a digital transformation pathway for a sustainable, just and equal future.
5. Member States should perform technological assessments of their national innovation systems at regular intervals drawing from regional and international foresight exercises.

Women's Health and Education Center's e-Learning, e-Health and e-Government Initiative is an investment in health, education, knowledge and technology – ultimately it is an investment in people, and in a healthier, safer, fairer future.

Leading lifelong learning for a healthier world!

Join the efforts