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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by Institut Jules-Destrée, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

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.

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Statement

In order to guarantee women's access to full employment and decent work, Millennium2015 recommends encouraging women and girls to focus on science and technology.

The sector of science and technology is promising. However, women and girls are still a minority in that area, mainly under the considerable influence of gender stereotypes and unconscious self-censorship.

Why should women and girls endeavour to advance in science and technology?

The sector in question is called upon to play a key role in sustainable development. It is a constantly evolving area whose tools adapt themselves to society's needs. Women and girls must direct their efforts to that sector so as not to be marginalized in the information society but to participate fully in the pursuit of sustainable development goals.

The sector affects all civil society activities. In health care, telemedicine helps remote diagnosis. The development of nanotechnologies improves care and treatment. By excelling in science and technology, women and girls may produce information and applications aimed at reducing maternal mortality at childbirth and eliminating diseases such as breast cancer and malaria.

In the area of communication, social networks have strengthened citizen participation by promoting encounters among peoples and exchanges and research on joint solutions to societal problems. Women and girls should master communication tools in order to participate in addressing major economic, political and social issues and express their aspiration to greater social equity.

In the field of employment, new forms of work have resulted from telecommuting and videoconferencing. Women and girls must invest efforts in the search for novel activities through new tools that can help them to break through glass ceilings that bar access to decision-making posts in their careers.

In the economic field, the proliferation of smartphone applications has led to the emergence of new forms of financial transactions, fund transfers, bank accounts and access to weather information necessary for increased agricultural productivity. The number of cell phones is increasing, including in developing countries. Women and girls must focus on such technology by developing relevant applications to make informal employment more secure and help women to move beyond it.

Millennium2015 encourages women and girls to direct their efforts to science and technology in order to influence (through scientific methods and approaches) the decisions and orientation of that sector with a view to building more equitable and open societies. Scientific and technological know-how must be accessible, beneficial and adapted to women and men so as to benefit society as a whole.

How should the access of girls and women to science and technology be supported?

Millennium2015 recommends developing, strengthening and/or generalizing a mentor system so that girls in scientific and technological subsectors receive support throughout their careers.

Millennia2015 proposes setting up a system of model roles at the local and international levels so that girls in science and technology may affirm themselves and have confidence in their capabilities. Such self-awareness and self-confidence will help combat unconscious self-censorship.

Millennia2015 recommends deconstructing stereotypes which assert that science and technology are reserved to men. Gender concepts should be set straight at an early age, particularly through textbooks.

Millennia2015 proposes supporting public policies addressing fathers as a way of supporting mothers, particularly in breaking through glass ceilings. Millennia2015 recommends that organizations and enterprises rethink their work schedules and structures so that workers may reconcile professional and private life.

Constant development in science and technology and their growing impact on citizens' daily life make women's participation in that sector a key issue for coming years. Ownership of science and ICTs at various stages (design, creation, utilization and so on) supports the development of an equal opportunity culture and equitable access to professional and social responsibilities.

This contribution is the outcome of collective thinking on the part of the members of "Women actors of development for the global challenges", the international network of volunteer researchers of Millennia2015. Millennia2015 is organized by Institut Jules Destrée and "Millennia2025 – Women and Innovation", a public utility foundation (website: www.millennia2015.org).