



## Economic and Social Council

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### **Commission on the Status of Women**

**Sixty-seventh session**

6–17 March 2023

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and  
to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly  
entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and  
peace for the twenty-first century”**

### **Statement submitted by World Organization of the Scout Movement, 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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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

With more than 57 million members, present in 172 National Scout Organisations, the World Organization of the Scout Movement welcomes with a lot of enthusiasm this year's priority team: "*Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls*". Young girls will still be left behind if we do not address the digital divide in our communities around the world.

Half of the world's population is female. When you cut the population a different way, half of the world is made up of youth. By denying women and young people equal rights, including access to the internet and technological education, we deny an enormous part of the population a chance to live life to their full potential. These demographics of women and girls and young people all face different types of injustices, discrimination, and structural setbacks, but represent a large cross-section of society and immense potential. When young people and women are empowered to be champions of gender justice and equality, the whole of society becomes more just and equal.

Young girls often have less access to digital literacy than boys and the technological gap gets even bigger when we cross-cut to young girls in rural areas. If we recall the agreed conclusions of the 62nd session of the Commission of Status of Women when the priority theme was "*Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls*". Women and young girls need to be meaningfully included in the design of digital progress and not just be an equal number.

Gender equality education, which also needs to include digital literacy, needs to be addressed as a social necessity to ensure full access and exercise of human rights for everyone, everywhere. Today's young generation embraces values and practices of justice and equality much more than previous generations. As drivers for positive change, efforts must be channelled into empowering young people to be torch holders to light their generation's path into a more equal world. Young people should be empowered to lead by example on our path towards a gender-equal society leaving no one behind.

Through education, young girls can empower themselves. Government, civil society organizations and other relevant actors must give them the tools they need to access transformative education, especially in rural areas, starting by changing the reasons why we encourage them to learn about technology. More than just closing the gap, it is necessary to change the mindset of those girls living in this context demonstrating why technology and the digital divide matter and how they can use digital literacy to benefit themselves.

Gender equality is everyone's responsibility. While it doesn't affect all individuals the same way, that doesn't mean that achieving a gender-equal world is a task allocated solely to girls and women. Men and other genders should also take an active role in creating a gender-equal society. Political, economic and social equality for women will benefit all the world's citizens. Together, we can eradicate prejudice and work for equal rights and respect for all. We should also advocate for education for other genders on these matters, particularly for boys and men. Primarily to stop the systemic damage towards girls and women, and on a second level, to ensure that boys and men play a constructive role in society, one that seeks the empowerment and involvement of girls and women.

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by some of the strongest injustices in society, which manifest in the forms of less access to education and

healthcare services, child marriage, sexual exploitation, among others. Through an intersectional lens, young women are a group disproportionately affected by many of today's challenges. Gender equality is a human rights issue. It is not just a women's issue; it is an issue that sets back society as a whole.

Progress has been made around the world in achieving gender equality and closing the digital divide, however, the role of non-formal education in instilling values of equality and justice in young people and the education efforts of youth organisations needs further investment. All systems and organisations should provide equal opportunities and empower girls and women should be recognized.

Governments must ensure that all policies and commitments aimed at advancing gender equality include a strong focus on gender equality education, including investment in non-formal education.

Youth-led organisations have a tremendous power to positively impact our society and teach values-based leadership from an early age and the private sector, governments, foundations, and philanthropic organisations must lend their support and expertise to strengthen youth organisations and movements.

Scouting reflects the societies in which it is present and provides equal opportunities for boys and girls in a safe social environment for all members. Since 1907 when Scouting was founded, values of equality and non-discrimination have guided all the decisions made in the organization and in how to lead the movement. We strive and commit to empower, prioritise and prove that when women lead and participate alongside male counterparts, organisations, movements and communities, the world will be a better place. We acknowledge that a gender-equal world is not only a necessity of human rights but that it is a requirement for progress in communities and global development.

Scouting educates for global citizenship, a comprehensive education that opens people's eyes and minds to the realities of the world and awakens them to achieve a world with more justice, equity and human rights for all. It gives young people the opportunity and skills to reflect and share their own points of view and play an active role within a global and interconnected society, as well as to understand and discuss the complex relationships between social and ecological problems, common political and economic issues and develop new ways of thinking and acting.

As a global force for good, the World Organization of the Scout Movement strongly encourages global leaders to

1. **Recognize the role of non-formal education in gender equality education:** organisations committed to advancing gender equality across the United Nations family, private sector, and civil society must promote, acknowledge, and invest in the impact of non-formal education as a path to accomplish gender equality.
2. **Connect the unconnected by addressing the digital divide on the education of women and young girls,** especially those living in rural areas by providing more resources, funding opportunities and political spaces to youth organisations/movements working on the ground.
3. **Provide young girls and adolescents with opportunities from a young age** to keep developing their digital abilities and to take on leadership roles, since they've been systematically rejected despite being well prepared. Girls must continually be encouraged to be part of decision-making bodies at all levels.
4. **Acknowledge and address inequalities:** among genders, by providing more leadership opportunities ensuring their equal rights, from national governments to the local and regional bodies, holding accountable boys and men for the change in their communities and societies by opening dialogue among the gender spectrum, and

to acknowledge and spread the benefits of coeducation in formal and non-formal settings.

5. **Replicate and share best practices:** Governments, the private sector and civil society must actively work in partnership to promote and replicate proven solutions to gender equality, women's empowerment, and women's participation in decision-making.

6. **Develop innovative approaches** to education to ensure quality education and improved enrolment retention rates for boys and girls and the elimination of gender discrimination and gender stereotypes in educational movements and non-formal education, as well as in the education system itself.

7. **End all forms of Gender-Based Violence and harmful practices against women and girls must end**, such as physical assault; sexual exploitation; female genital mutilation; child, early and forced marriage, amongst other types of violence. We advocate for a world where every young person has the chance to develop their full potential, regardless of gender.

8. Develop new approaches to gender-based education for boys aiming at ending chauvinism. It is necessary to primarily stop the systemic damage towards girls and women and secondly, men and boys also suffer from the effects of chauvinism which causes a series of mental health issues during their lives. Boys should be educated knowing that they can demonstrate feelings and they do not need to be strong all the time.

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