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17th Session

Agenda Item: Advancing Access to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to Enhance Women's Entrepreneurship, Creativity, and Innovation

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
Empowering Women's Economic Participation

The United Nations Women Executive Board,

Appreciating the continued efforts of SOS International Organization in supporting women and children through education, family strengthening, skills development, and humanitarian assistance in vulnerable communities worldwide,

Affirming the legal and moral framework provided by the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*, which mandates the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in education and employment,

Recalling the successful implementation of the *Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ)* framework by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Caribbean Development Bank, which standardizes technical and vocational qualifications, strengthens skill recognition, labour mobility, and workforce development across Member States in the region,

Recalling the *International Labour Organization Human Resources Development Convention No. 142 (1975)*, which calls for comprehensive and coordinated vocational guidance and training policies closely linked with employment, and recognizing its relevance to expanding women's access to market-relevant skills, entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation,

Noting the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) *Institute for Statistics* (2017), women account for only 43% of students enrolled in upper secondary vocational programs due to financial barriers, gender stereotypes, and limited access to technical training,

Noting that Member States should consider sharing knowledge, experiences, and promoting practices, reinforce international TVET data collection and make use of international and regional networks, conferences, and other forums for mutual learning and advancing

international cooperation in TVET according to *Recommendation Concerning Technical and Vocational Education and Training* published by UNESCO in 2015,

Recognizing that women represented only 35% of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) students globally in 2023 due to gender norms leading to limiting women from pursuing education, according to *UNESCO's Girls' and Women's Education in STEM* published by UNESCO in 2024,

Reaffirming that 76.2% of women, and particularly mothers, have limited access to TVET courses due to the burden of unpaid care responsibilities and lack of affordable childcare services, limiting their opportunities to acquire skills and access decent employment, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO) report conducted in 2018,

Acknowledging that the UN Women and ILO survey conducted in 2018, women in rural areas perform up to 76% of unpaid agricultural labor and spend 2.5 to 3.2 times more hours on domestic tasks than men, and continue to face significant barriers to education and economic opportunities due to household responsibilities, poverty, and inadequate infrastructure, limiting their ability to achieve financial independence and contribute fully to society,

Concerning male-dominated jobs in STEM fields, despite men and women achieving the same level of education, according to the *Global Gender Gap Report 2017*, in higher education, where women continue to be underrepresented, STEM fields are included, while 6% of women major in engineering, construction, and manufacturing, compared to 19% of men,

Highlighting the findings of UNESCO research conducted in 2023 across 104 low- and middle-income countries, which found that 87% of surveyed countries have a higher proportion of men enrolled in formal TVET programmes, further recognizing the underrepresentation of women and their limited access to TVET, particularly in STEM fields such as engineering, information technology, and digital innovation, due to persistent gender stereotypes,

Recognizing that, according to the UNESCO *Guide for Educators* (2000), 45% of women face barriers to accessing equal education, digital technology, and vocational training, particularly in rural regions, and face critical infrastructure barriers to accessing TVET, such as a lack of safe transportation and gender-sensitive sanitation facilities, which significantly contribute to high dropout rates among young women in secondary school,

Welcoming the global success of the HeForShe movement, which is an invitation for men and people of all genders to stand in solidarity with women to create a bold solidarity, and has engaged over 2 million men and mobilized 3 billion online conversations for gender equality,

1. *Requests* UN Women to hold an annual international conference to raise awareness among all Member States of the importance of increasing female participation in TVET programmes related to STEM fields by:

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- a. Inviting female students in TVET programmes related to STEM fields, government officials, educators, and recruiters from STEM fields to understand the challenges that female students are currently facing, discuss possible solutions, and promote actions to reduce gender stereotypes that influence students' career choices;
 - b. Encouraging all Member States to exchange best practices that promote women's participation in STEM-related TVET programmes and employment;
 - c. Requesting all Member States to publish a voluntary annual report summarizing the situation in the states based on the opinions of female students and policy recommendations to support women's participation in STEM education and careers before the conference and to consider better policy at the conference;
 2. *Further invites* international cooperation among Member States, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO-UNEVOC, and World Bank to expand women's access to TVET 2030 by:
 - a. Encouraging the World Bank to invest in digital skills training and entrepreneurship education, and expanding scholarship programs that provide financial assistance for tuition, transportation, childcare scholarships, and learning materials, such as laptops and the Internet, especially for women in rural areas and marginalized communities;
 - b. Developing gender responsive TVET policies under CEDAW that eliminate discrimination and harassment, and promote equal enrolment opportunities;
 3. *Encourages* all Member States to communicate with the ILO to improve women's access to inclusive and high-quality TVET and STEM education in accordance with their national priorities and stages of development by:
 - a. Building strong partnerships with educational institutions, industries, and the private sector to align training with labor market demands;
 - b. Integrating entrepreneurship, digital skills, innovation, leadership, and STEM-related skills into TVET curricula, aiming to increase women's employment and entrepreneurship opportunities;
 - c. Increasing opportunities for women in digital skills, entrepreneurship, and engineering, cooperating with the ILO and supported by UNESCO, UNEVOC programme as in UNESCO TVET programme to promote skill development, capacity building, and sharing of best practices;
 - d. Establishing safe, inclusive, and gender responsive learning environments through anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies, confident reporting mechanisms, accessible sanitation facilities, and gender sensitivity training for teachers, administrators and employees;
 4. *Calls upon* all Member States to establish and expand vocational training centers for women, particularly in rural areas, by 2035, in partnership with the SOS Charity

Organization, with financial support from the International Development Association (IDA) and oversight by the United Nations, through:

- a. Agriculture and Sustainable development by providing special training programs in ethical modern farming techniques, climate-smart agriculture, water conservation, and sustainable food production to improve productivity and income;
 - b. Handicraft and Local industries for teaching women traditional crafts, textile production, sewing, weaving, and other local industries to help them generate income and preserve cultural heritage;
 - c. Digital literacy and Technology Skills, such as offering training in basic computer skills, internet use, digital communication, online marketing, and e-commerce to improve employment and business opportunities;
 - d. The management of small businesses by educating women on financial management, budgeting, entrepreneurship, marketing, customer service, and business planning to help them start and successfully manage small businesses;
5. *Encourages* all Member States to promote family-oriented policies that support women's participation in education and employment through cooperation with UNESCO by:
- a. Encouraging childcare facilities at TVET because many mothers cannot attend training while caring for their children, with childcare support, women can focus on learning new skills and have better job opportunities;
 - b. Encouraging all Member States to put childcare centres with TVET to help women get TVET courses by reducing the burden of carework, which allows them to get a job or to take TVET courses;
 - c. Establishing clear maternity leave policies and childcare support for men and women in workforce to access at least 14 weeks of paid parental leave^in workforce to access at least 14 weeks of paid parental leave;
 - d. Supporting flexible learning and working arrangements for TVET which are accessible in the evening and weekends, allowing them to work half-days while attending education or TVET programs;
 - e. Providing financial assistance or training allowances for low-income mothers participating in TVET programs to reduce education and employment financial barriers;
6. *Calls upon* all Member States to strengthen and institutionalize the implementation of UNESCO's existing gender-sensitive infrastructure within TVET institutions for gender transformation according to national priorities and resources to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for women by:

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- a. Allocating dedicated budgets and personnel for the maintenance and continuous improvement of gender-sensitive infrastructure;
 - b. Conducting periodic gender audits and monitoring mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness and accessibility of infrastructure for women and girls;
7. *Calls upon* Member States, in partnership with UN Women, to launch the 'HeForShe for TVET' campaign to mitigate gender biases, foster inclusive environments, and ensure financial sustainability by:
- a. Engaging male industry leaders and families to promote hiring female graduates and support girls pursuing vocational pathways;
 - b. Training instructors and students within male-dominated TVET sectors to dismantle classroom stereotypes;
 - c. Providing corporate scholarships, grants, and paid apprenticeships tied directly to HeForShe commitments;
8. *Encourages* all Member States, in accordance with national circumstances and available resources, with technical support from UNESCO and UNESCO-UNEVOC, where appropriate, to strengthen women's access to vocational guidance and TVET, while supporting transitions to employment and entrepreneurship, through existing national and local TVET systems by 2035:
- a. Requesting education authorities to review curricula using existing data on local job opportunities, employer needs, enrolment, and completion rates to identify skills needed for women's employment and entrepreneurship;
 - b. Encouraging TVET to provide guidance before enrolment and upon completion, including information on:
 - i. Course requirements, learning pathways, and further training opportunities;
 - ii. Scholarships, tuition support, learning materials, transport assistance, or digital access support to help women enter and complete TVET programmes;
 - c. Integrating practical technical, digital, entrepreneurial, problem-solving, and project-based activities into existing public or community-based TVET courses, especially in sectors relevant to local economies;
 - d. Promoting career-related support, including apprenticeship information, career pathways, and links with local employers or business organizations;
 - e. Inviting responsible authorities to review progress through available data on:
 - i. Women's participation and completion;
 - ii. Continuation to further training;

iii. Transition to employment or entrepreneurship;

9. *Recommends* all Member States to expand upon the UNESCO 'Her Education, Our Future' initiative to further develop public awareness campaigns with the goal of empowering women and increasing participation in TVET programs by:

- a. Integrating advertisements by vocational programs and STEM schools in public and online spaces such as public transportation and social media to promote existing programs and scholarships that are available to women in their states;
- b. Incorporating International Women's Day celebrations such as the UN Bonn agency in 2019 to highlight the global necessity of women's education and equality through poster exhibitions, featured presentations, and panel discussions by women in STEM careers on school campuses;
- c. Expanding the gender responsive marketing toolkit launched by UN Women to raise awareness about how gender equality can be advertised.