



International Advocacy Reports and Statements

Expert Group Meeting on Gender, Science and Technology

Report on the UN division for the Advancement of Women (now part of UN Women)

28 September- 1October 2010

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The Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on Gender, Science and Technology brought together invited international experts and observers representing various international women's organisations and UN groups: UNICEF, IFAD, ILO, WFP, UNIFEM (now part of UN Women). This meeting was in preparation for the 55th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 55) on Gender, Education and Employment which will take place in New York from 28 February – 2 March 2011.

The first two days' highlights were the background papers by Professor Londa Schiebinger, a History of Science professor from Stanford and by Professor Flavia Franconi, a professor of Pharmacology from the University of Sassari. The latter exposed the fact that most drugs are tested on men and male rats¹.

As observers were allowed to put forward papers, I tabled a recent paper which appeared in the International Journal of Gender, Science and Technology². Two other reports of special interest, which I am going to follow up on, were on "Gender Equality and Free and Open Source Software (FOSS)" and on the International "Girls in ICT Day" Initiative.

The remaining time was spent in working groups on access to science and technology education and employment; science and technology for development; and the use of sex and gender analysis in knowledge production and technology. Each working group developed specific recommendations.

The EGM adopted recommendations covering three main areas addressed by the working groups. These will be available in the final report³ of the EGM shortly. This report will go forward to the CSW 55 along with further member reports on education and employment.

I attended as a representative of the International Federation of Women Graduates (IFUW) and participated in the Working Group on Girls' and Women's Participation in Science Engineering and Technology (SET) Education and Professional SET Employment.

Our draft recommendations focussed on the need for:

- universal access to SET education for girls and women throughout their lifetimes as the essential foundation for careers in SET;
- eliminating gender based discrimination in SET education and employment;
- mainstreaming gender equality in education and the workplace;
- the creation and implementation of a gender action plan by all Human Resource units;
- gender-responsive budgeting;
- equal pay, entitlements and social protections;

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- gender sensitive training for SET teachers and gender balance of STEM teachers;
- eliminating social-cultural factors that are barriers to girls in women in SET;
- guidelines for gender-sensitive SET education assessment and promotion in SET employment;
- promotion of positive female role models in SET and active encouragement for girls to pursue careers in SET;
- tackling negative gender-stereotypes in the media;
- attracting, recruiting, advancement, retention and reintegration of more women in SET careers;
- monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of these recommendations through relevant, internationally comparable sex-disaggregated statistics.

Experts attended from the following countries: Argentina, Tunisia, Italy, Canada, Korea, USA, Rwanda, Denmark, Micronesia, Bulgaria, India, Kenya, and Mexico.



Observers attended from the following organisations:

American Association of University Women (AAUW), International Alliance of Women, International Federation of University Women, French Association of Women Engineers, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs
Education International Global Unions, Practical Action, Scientific Culture and Gender Issues, Directorate General for Research, European Commission

There are various activities that the IFUW and its branches could undertake to support more girls and women in SET education at all levels. It would be good if IFUW had specific statistics regarding how much of the scholarship funds went to support women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) subjects. It would also be good to know how many members have degrees in STEM subjects and careers in STEM related professions. AAUW did a report on “Women in STEM - Why So Few?” and it would be good for IFUW to do something similar building on their work.

References

1. Nature on Gendering of Scientific Research:

<http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v465/n7299/full/465665a.html>

2. Evolution of a Cross-year Mentoring Scheme: <http://dspace.uel.ac.uk/jspui/handle/10552%20/326>.

3. EGM official page – final report to be posted here (also includes background, expert and observers papers): http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/gst_2010/index.html

4. CSW Facebook page:

<http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=157264280965014&ref=rf#!/pages/United-Nations-Commission-on-the-Status-of-Women-CSW/130940353596510>

5. CSW Facebook page with photos from EGM:

<http://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=159724664051412&set=a.158673617489850.38755.130940353596510#!/album.php?aid=38755&id=130940353596510&page=2>