

**Statement by  
David Cooper  
Acting Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity  
International Day of Women and Girls in Science  
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I am very pleased, on behalf of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, to join this commemoration of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science.

The gender gap continues to persist at all levels of science and technology across the world. Though there has been progress towards increasing participation in higher education, women and girls are still under-represented in these fields. It is imperative that we continue the hard but necessary work towards breaking these gender barriers and opening the door for more women and girls in science.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework places great emphasis on the full and effective participation and empowerment of women and girls. Target 23 of the Framework aims to ensure gender equality in the implementation through a gender-responsive approach where women and girls have equal opportunity and capacity to contribute to the three objectives of the Convention.

More broadly, underpinning the issue of women in science, women and girls globally continue to be overrepresented in statistics of poverty and disadvantage, in unemployment statistics or un-recognised and unpaid employment, and in criminal justice systems. Having more women and girls in science, requires that women and girls, 50% of the human population, have a level playing field to begin with. Women and girls are already excelling in many countries and in many disciplines through tertiary education.

The Gender Plan of Action (2022-2023) is a tool that can guide Parties to implement the Framework and take concrete actions aimed at enabling women and girls to, not only take an interest in science, but to innovate, demonstrate, elevate, and advance in a field where they are greatly needed and genuinely welcomed.

The world has made considerable progress towards gender parity in education, especially at basic education levels. However, for many girls and women, equal and quality educational opportunities remain out of reach. About two-thirds of the estimated 776 million illiterate adults are women, reflecting decades of limited access and poor-quality education. Despite this, it is encouraging that more and more women continue to be recognized, through programmes such as United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP's) prestigious Champions of the Earth and Young Champions of the Earth awards, just to name a few, for their contributions to using science to help tackle the triple planetary crisis of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss and pollution and waste.

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Today, and every day, let us commit to dismantling the upstream barriers faced by women and girls, to provide education and career pathways that enable women to continue play an even greater role in science and other career pathways.